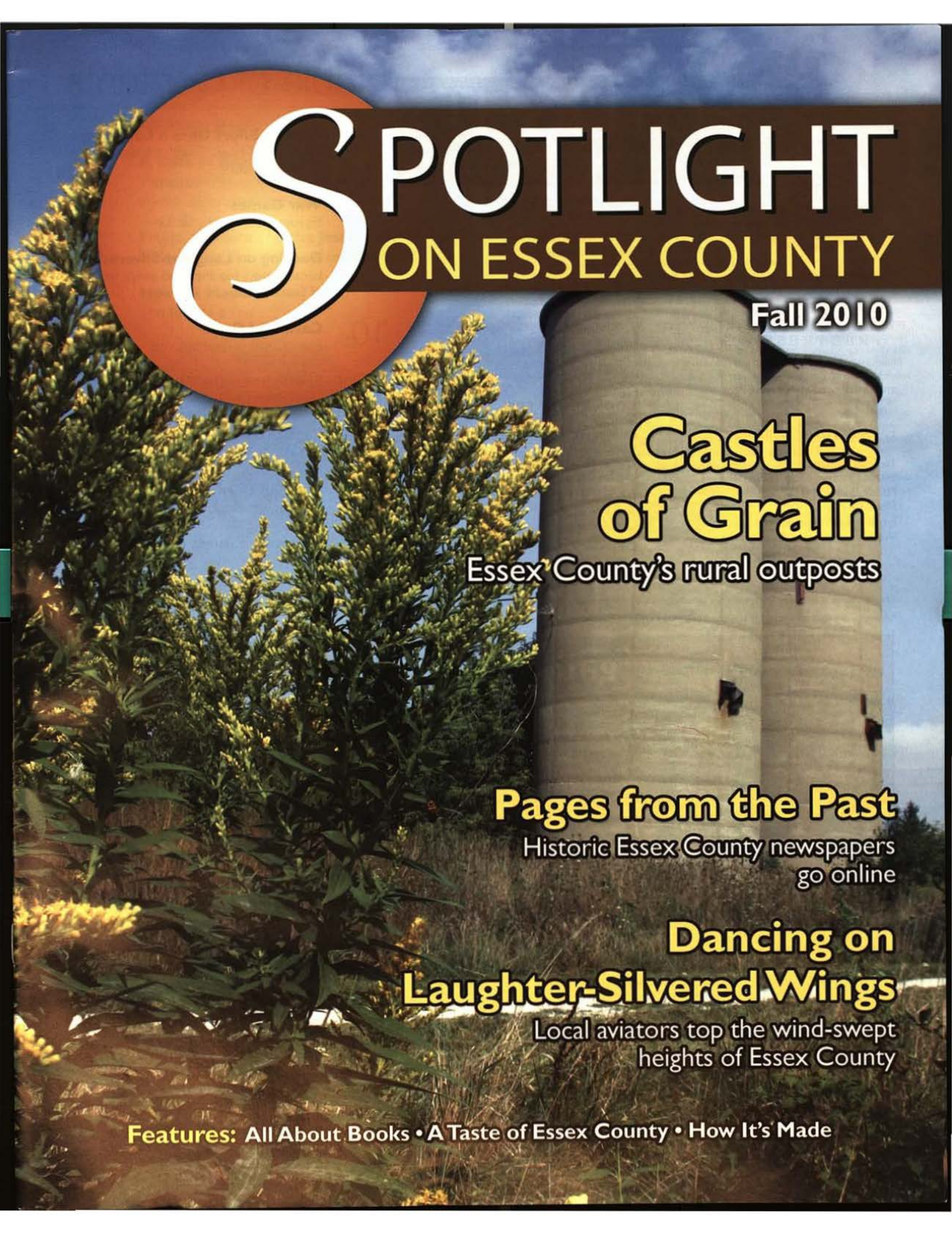




SPOTLIGHT ON ESSEX COUNTY

Fall 2010

Castles of Grain

Essex County's rural outposts

Pages from the Past

Historic Essex County newspapers
go online

Dancing on Laughter-Silvered Wings

Local aviators top the wind-swept
heights of Essex County

Features: All About Books • A Taste of Essex County • How It's Made

SPOTLIGHT ON ESSEX COUNTY

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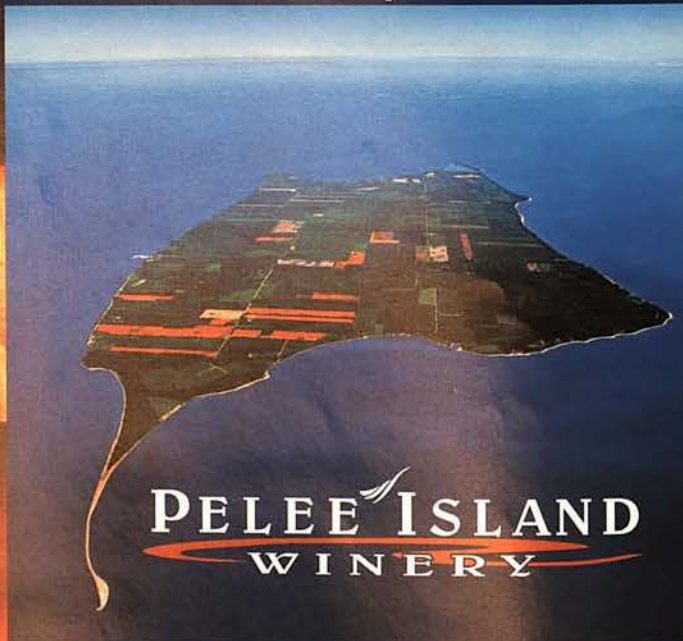
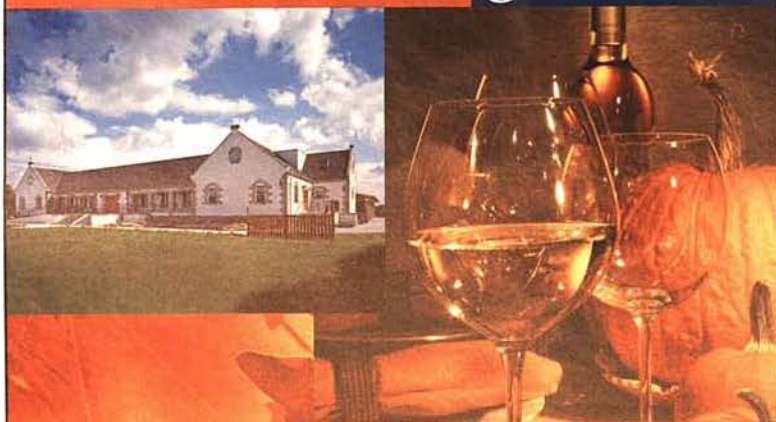
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Editor's Note

"There seems to be a deep and personal connection to the stories that we tell here."

— Elizabeth LeBlanc, Fort Malden National Historic Site

When Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island introduced its new marketing campaign this summer, a flicker of joy flared in my heart. The new slogan – "One Region. Countless Stories" (punctuation mark included) – instantly resonated for me as the publisher and editor of *Spotlight on Essex County*.

That flicker of joy gave way to an abundance of emotions when I viewed the organization's promotional video at www.visitwindsorsex.com. I was awestruck by the beauty of the images selected... from fishing and boating and birdwatching... to nightlife and plantlife and history. I was also impressed with the eloquence of the speakers who extol the virtues of our region, including Elizabeth LeBlanc of Fort Malden National Historic Site. When I heard her say, "there seems to be a deep and personal connection to the stories that we tell here, stories that help us understand the very essence of Canada," another flicker of joy burst from my heart. In reality she may have been referring to the tales told about the War of 1812 and the fort, but in my mind she was talking about the "deep and personal connection" people in Essex County have to the stories about themselves.

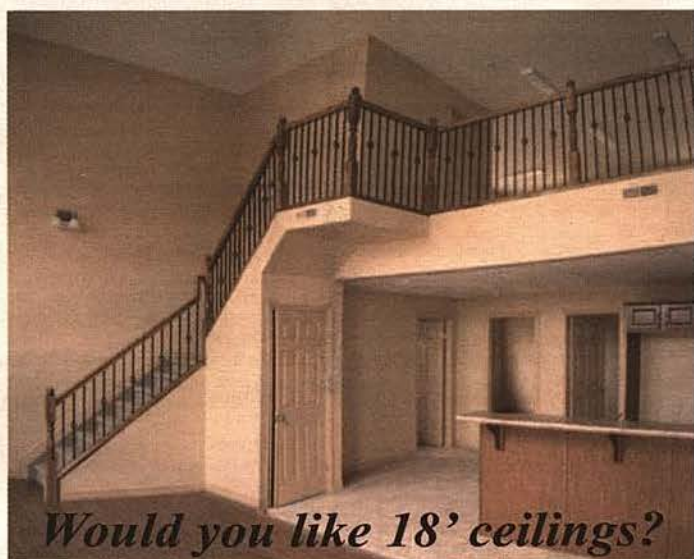
This magazine was born from a recognition that there are, indeed, countless stories to tell about Essex County – its people, its history, our hobbies, where we live and how we spend our time. Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island's slogan is a form of validation for us at *Spotlight* – that we're on the right track – that the people of Essex County are really starting to believe in the limitless potential of this region. Identifying the stories that matter and giving expression to those stories is what we've chosen to do in this magazine.

As we celebrate our fourth quarterly issue – and one full year of publishing the magazine – I'd like to thank everyone who has helped to make it happen – the writers, the advertisers, the *Essex Free Press* staff who regularly turn the hint of an idea into a work of art, and you... our readers.

Laurie Brett

Publisher & Editor

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A LITTLE EFFORT GOES A LONG WAY

The spirit of Essex County travels around the world

By Jennifer Cranston

We have all, at some point, had our heartstrings pulled by images of extreme poverty, the aftermath of war or natural disaster in another part of the world. Some of us even make the sacrifice of a "cup of coffee a day" to save a child affected by these conditions.

Fewer still take it upon themselves to make a substantial and tangible difference in the lives of many by giving thousands of their own dollars, days or weeks of their own lives, and foregoing confidence in their own personal safety. It takes an unusual level of dedication to travel to a developing country or disaster area to build a school or clinic, to lend your services to the improvement of health and quality of life for hundreds.

Humanitarians come from all walks of life. Every age from teen to senior, every profession from doctor to farmer to housewife, every mission from orphans to education to simple clean water are represented among the humanitarians who call Essex County home.

People who do this kind of work invariably say that the personal rewards far outweigh the sacrifices. These endeavours are addictive and contagious.

John Blair of Kingsville is a retired Chrysler employee who has been visiting God's Littlest Angels (GLA) orphanage and the Callabasse Christian School in Haiti regularly for about eight years. In total, he has taken twelve trips to the tiny impoverished nation and will make his thirteenth this fall.

Much of the work of GLA and Blair, who recently took a place on the organization's board of directors, has been focused on earthquake recovery. While the earthquake that hit the struggling nation in January caused only minor injuries and damage to the school, orphanage, staff and children, many homes in the village were leveled. Food and basic supplies became scarce for a time and remain more expensive.

"The last trip I spent sorting and delivering supplies," says Blair.

In February, he and other volunteers loaded several shipping containers full of supplies in Colorado. Blair then traveled to meet the supplies when they arrived in Haiti to see that they were distributed.

He says the hardest part of leaving Haiti is coming home and re-adjusting to the relatively opulent and luxurious lifestyle we are accustomed to.

"The first time I came home I was angry at people complaining about nothing," he says.

People who consider doing this type of work, he cautions, need to be aware that, in many cases, they will be walking into poverty that is beyond our imagination.

"You never know what you're walking into," he says. "Words don't do it justice. Pictures don't do it justice. These people have nothing. You have to see it to believe it. Many of them don't even know what money looks like."

Blair explains that his work with GLA has allowed him to meet and form friendships with people from all over the world. He keeps going back, he says, because of the children.

"The kids grow on you. As a father and a grandfather how do you not love these kids?"

He has had the joy of being able to watch the schoolchildren grow up and has seen

firsthand the difference that is being made.

"When I first went, the kids weren't very healthy; anemic, open sores on their skin. Now they are healthy and happy — with proper nutrition and medical care that we make sure they get."

GLA is an organization that is very successful in its efforts to aid the children and families of Haiti. They have been able to support the school, orphanage and surrounding village by sending about 65 pre-fabricated earthquake/hurricane proof houses, each worth \$4,000, and digging five wells at a cost of about \$28,000 each.

In Haiti it is often necessary to dig a thousand feet through solid rock to get to water.

Neil McBeth, centre, helps restore well water to a small Nigerian village during a 12-day visit in 2008.



Villagers pitch in to help restore well water to their small Nigerian village.

Clean water is something that most of us take for granted, but in many parts of the world it is a rare commodity.

Neil McBeth is a Rotarian from Essex who has made it a priority in his life to bring wells to Nigeria.

His humanitarian journey began in 2007 when he and his wife, Cheryl, traveled to Ghana as part of RELAY, — Rotarians Enhancing Learning for African Youth.

The following year, McBeth went to Nigeria as a Rotary volunteer, to renovate a school and part of a hospital, as well as investigate possible "project sights." During that trip he found several worthy projects, but one in particular caught his interest.

"One of the last stops was a 'settlement village' called Sharada," he explains.

Sharada is about one square mile in size, with about 800 million people living in it. When McBeth first visited the place, they had water but it wasn't safe to drink. The school had no building and there was no real medical clinic.

"I came away from that village thinking 'what can I do?'" he says.

As Rotary District Governor at the time, it was his responsibility to visit all of the clubs in this district.

"I told them of the village and provided them with the opportunity to donate what they could afford."

In conjunction with the Rotary Foundation and the Rotary Club in that region of Nigeria, enough money was raised to put in 12 borehole wells. The village only had room for six so the others are to be dug throughout Nigeria at hospital compounds, schools and other places in need.

This project has created hope that Rotary in Nigeria will be able to raise more money and dig more wells.

McBeth will return to Nigeria and Sharada some time this fall, when he will look at other potential project sights.

"I have promised to take on one of (the projects) and find other partners to help," he explains.

He and Cheryl will also soon be going to India as non-medical volunteers on a Rotoplast team. Rotoplast focuses on providing reconstructive surgery for children.

Rotary International provided McBeth with the opportunity to fill a need he and his family have always had.

"We've always been community-minded. I'm part of Rotary because of the opportunities to serve the bigger community," he says.

The emotional rewards are well worth the effort for McBeth.

"You can't help but be touched by what you see and the friendships you make," he says.

Essex optometrist Julie Ricci has also been able to use the vast infrastructure of Rotary to make a difference. Ricci, who lives in Leamington, first worked with a partnership between The First Baptist Church of Leamington and Rotary to bring a vision clinic to Haiti in 2007. She held another vision clinic in Haiti in 2009, and earlier this year she traveled to India to work with an immunization program.

During the vision clinics, Ricci says, it is impossible to see everyone who needs help.

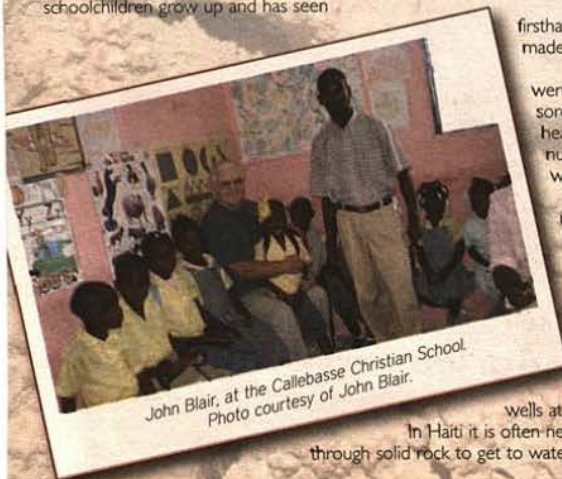
"It's amazing how many people flock when they find out you're coming," she explains.

Even though she spends two or three days seeing about 100 people a day, many more end up being turned away.

"You feel like you're not even touching the iceberg."

Ricci has made it a habit to serve a week to two weeks a year in developing countries.

"It brings you a joy you can't get anywhere else," she says.



John Blair, at the Callebasse Christian School. Photo courtesy of John Blair.

One of her most moving experiences was bringing a young Haitian boy to London, Ont., for cataract surgery. He was five years old when he was brought to her team's attention in 2009.

"When I saw that (he had cataracts), I jumped. I was so excited because that's something we can fix."

It involved finding a surgeon in London to do the procedure, raising about \$18,000 and cutting through reams of red tape to get the boy and his mother to Canada. The surgery was a success and Ricci is still in regular contact with the family.

People considering leaving the safety of Canada to serve in less developed, foreign countries should know that parts of their experience will be scary and disturbing.

Ricci says that in Haiti she was simultaneously moved by the multitude of stars she could see at night, and made a little uneasy by the voodoo chanting that she could hear. She found it disconcerting that the doorman at a restaurant she visited carried an automatic firearm.

The scariest moment for her happened during a four-hour trip from Port-au-Prince to the site of her clinic, when she passed through a riot. Haiti is notorious for vigilante justice and she witnessed this firsthand as she made eye contact with a bleeding man who was the recipient of this justice. She lost eye contact with him as an angry crowd closed in around him.

"I don't know what happened to him," she says.

Ricci's travels have given her a moving respect for the freedoms, standards and effective government we enjoy in Canada. People complain about our government, she says, but they can't truly appreciate how good we have things until they've seen the results of real corruption and deprivation in other countries.

Six-year-old Jordon Laguerre, left, was suffering from cataracts in January 2009 when he was examined by optometrist Julie Ricci in his mountain village of LaColline, Haiti. In May 2010, Jordon had cataract surgery in London, Ont.



Working on behalf of Rotary International, Julie Ricci administers oral polio vaccine to a young child during a trip to India in February.

"Hearing the stories of the people and the appreciation they have for what little they have," he explains, "it's just down-to-earth, basic stuff."

While you are physically serving others, the pair says it brings with it an inner reward that is difficult to explain.

"You learn how significant small things are. You feel part of the bigger part of humanity," Yantzi says.

John Garinger of Essex discovered the power of humanitarianism through his work with Essex District High School.

After speaking to a Civics class on global awareness, Garinger began looking for a more effective way to reach the kids. After two weeks of research he found "Schools for Salone." The organization works to build schools in Sierra Leone. Garinger was so moved by the destruction civil war brought to the country that he was moved to do something more.

He sent an email to the organization and committed to building them a school. Then he went about getting the school community of Essex involved. Community organizations like Rotary and the Kinsmen also helped out.

The "Maforeka Raiders" were born. Led by EDHS students and supported by area elementary schools, the Maforeka Raiders raised \$42,000 that helped build a school in the village of Maforeka in record time.

Garinger inspired the students to get involved and make a difference. With his guidance and the hard work of the children of Essex, the money was raised faster than planned. Although the school's completion wasn't expected until November, it was finished by the end of July. The children of Essex will continue to support the Maforeka school indefinitely.

Garinger plans to visit "the school that Essex built" this fall.

"This has been life changing for me," he says. "Part of my future lies there, I just don't know how."



Construction of a new school in Maforeka, Sierra Leone was completed in July 2010, about four months ahead of schedule.

Maforekan students show soccer balls – the front one signed "Striker" – that Essex District High School students sent to them in early 2010. Fifty soccer balls were distributed in the village in Sierra Leone as part of a Schools For Salone project that grew into a school construction project supported by the Essex family of schools.



Rotary is not the only organization with an admirable track record and excellent international infrastructure. The Mennonite Central Committee is a worldwide relief organization that began shortly after the Second World War. It started with the Mobile Meat Cannery, which still comes to Leamington on its annual tour and helps to feed people around the world. MCC has grown to include disaster services and aid in all forms, everywhere.

Through this organization Greg Yantzi and Kathy Vollans, of Harrow Mennonite Church, were able to go to New Orleans in April 2009 to help in continuing recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They are both hoping to return this fall or next spring.

"MCC is able to respond to disasters because they are set up for that," says Yantzi. "But the intention is to do long-term recovery work."

Vollans says that it is very hard work but well worth it.

"It's exciting to be honest. Part of it is the adventure," she says.

Yantzi likes the knowledge that his work makes a difference in difficult lives.

Essex County has a reputation for being a charitable and caring community. This is just a sampling of the many people who are making that spirit felt around the world. The problems of the world seem overwhelming, but these local humanitarians, by focusing on one issue at a time, have improved the lives of thousands.

If you have the desire to help, the following contacts can help find a mission that's right for you.

God's Littlest Angels, GLS.org
Rotary International, rotary.org
Mennonite Central Committee, mcc.org
Schools For Salone, schoolsforsalone.org



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WAR GAMES

EQUIPPING OUR TROOPS FOR FUN

By Fred Groves

Joe McLeod has played a lot of hockey. A defenceman with the Essex 73's Junior C Hockey Club from 1988 to 1993, McLeod is now playing the great Canadian sport a long, long way from Essex County.

The 38-year-old from Maidstone, a corporal with the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment, has been serving his country in Afghanistan since May. His love for the game of hockey, however, has not waned. He and his fellow Canadian Forces soldiers regularly engage in a conflict that is decidedly Canadian, courtesy of the very competitive Kandahar Ball Hockey League. "I don't know who started the league but there are 24 teams," McLeod explained.

Military personnel representing countries from all over the world participate in the league. McLeod's team's lack of success on the concrete rink led him to think that perhaps the equipment was contributing to the problem.

"They were using these sticks that you use in the driveway when you're five years old," he said.

Struggling to pick up wins, the Canadian team was desperately in need of new equipment. That's where McLeod's good friend Jamie McDermott was able to lend a hand. McDermott, a former assistant coach with the 73's, and now with the Leamington Flyers, organized an equipment drive.

"Joe called Jamie and said, 'Can you get us some hockey sticks?'" said Scott Miller of Miller's Source for Sports in Essex.

In June, the local sports store became a collection spot for the hockey equipment that included everything from sticks and balls to tape and even goalie equipment. Glen O'Neil's LaSalle Sports Zone was another drop off spot. In addition, McDermott confirmed that the Flyers would be donating all of their old hockey gloves.

'Support Our Troops' is a slogan that has become very well known and the sign posted in the window at the local sports store gained quick attention.

"People came in with some money to buy sticks and the Bill Jones 3-on-3 Tournament bought the tape," said Miller.

"One gentleman brought in a set of goalie pads and gloves and a few people brought in balls."

"The response was quick. Everyone thinks a lot of Joe," Miller added.

"When you have a guy like Joe who is respected, it sparks a lot of interest," said McDermott.

On August 13, McLeod and

McDermott sat at a table at the Grand Central Tavern in Essex, recounting stories from their days together in minor hockey and with the Essex 73's. McLeod was proudly wearing his 73's ball cap, which he has with him all the time in Afghanistan.

"He called me out of frustration because he didn't have a hockey stick," said McDermott.

The two buddies communicate regularly through e-mail. It was McDermott who let McLeod know all the details about the recent birth of McLeod's new son, just before his August leave.

McLeod says he is very grateful for the support he gets from his wife, friends and family. Being a soldier takes its toll mentally and physically. Being away from your family and the ones you love for several months at a time is, to say the very least, difficult. Finding ways to relieve the stress at times can be tough.

"It plays on your mind all the time," said McLeod.

Canadian Forces troops based in Kandahar are kept very busy. Recreational time is generally limited, but when the troops do get to relax there are lots of activities to enjoy.

Captain Steve Ball, an officer with the 31st Service Battalion in Windsor, said most soldiers have laptop computers and can therefore stay in touch with family and friends.

"For the people on the main base, we have Canada House, which shows movies," said Ball, a Windsor native.

"There is a recreational volleyball league and the Americans have a football league," he added.

Well-stocked libraries, visits from NHL players and celebrities, access to fitness facilities, DVD rentals and even charity casinos are some of the things that help pass the time.

"It is real hard to get bored over there," said Ball.

Since his first tour of duty to Afghanistan, Ball says the range of recreational opportunities and the ability to communicate with friends and family back home has improved.

"They want to take care of us. It's a very stressful time," said Ball.

One local organization that thinks highly of the Canadian Forces is the Woodslee Friendship Club, which has been supporting the troops since 2007. That year they had a yellow ribbon campaign.

"We decided to decorate our (flower) barrels and we had a troop campaign. It was to support the troops," said Donna Roubos.

After that, the group made troop boxes that were filled with personal items including magazines, granola bars and Tim Hortons cards.

"Last year we decided not to do that. Instead we had a get-together of the mothers of the soldiers," said Roubos.

The Milne Centre near Woodslee is the location of a Wall of Heroes on which all the Canadian soldiers who have been killed in action are honoured.

Another way in which the Woodslee Friendship Club has shown its support is by making more than 400 scarves to be shipped overseas to soldiers, including Woodslee's Sgt. Duane Adams who has completed seven tours of duty, two of them in Afghanistan.

"We accepted donations and we had 443 scarves that were sent to the troops," said Roubos.

"The word spread and people were sending in letters with money in it."

When it comes to supporting our troops, people are happy to contribute in any small way – from writing letters to knitting scarves to donating hockey equipment. Every selfless gesture is meaningful. But perhaps McDermott said it best.

"The work we do here does not compare to what they do over there."

Essex Source for Sports has become a collection point for used hockey equipment that is forwarded to Canadian Forces troops in Afghanistan. (Photo: Kevin Wickham)

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Friends Jamie McDermott, left, and Corporal Joe McLeod show off one of McLeod's Essex 73's ball caps during McLeod's military leave in August.

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Dancing on *laughter-silvered* wings

*Local aviators top the
wind-swept heights of Essex County*

By Andy Comber

RCAF Pilot Officer John Magee's sonnet *High Flight* has become the mantra for aviators since it was completed in 1941 when Magee was merely 19 years old. The first part of the poem expresses the exhilaration of flight:

*"Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence."*

Leaving the safety of *terra firma* and taking flight had never been Elsie Barnett's dream. Not as a young girl growing up in her hometown of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, or later as a hairdresser, or even when she said "I do" in July 1963 and married Rick Barnett, a farm-raised Essex County veterinarian.

More than a dozen years into their marriage, Elsie had settled into farm life. She worked out of her home as a hairdresser and, when she wasn't clipping or rolling hair, she started raising pigs for market.

"When pigs fly" is something people say of the impossible. But for Elsie, one might say pigs helped her fly or, at the very least, led her in that direction.

"I used to go to the coffee shop in Essex. And one day this boy, about eight years old, told me he had heard I had pigs and he would like to see them," Elsie said. "I said sure, but we would have to ask his dad."

On returning home, Elsie told Rick that the boy and his father would be dropping by to see the pigs.

"Rick asked me, 'Well, who is it?'" Elsie said.

"The boy is Erik and his father is Jerry Billing," she replied.

Rick's jaw dropped, she said.

"Jerry Billing! Don't you know who that is, Elsie? He's famous! He flew Spitfires in the war," Elsie recalled Rick saying.

At the time, Elsie had no knowledge of Billing, a decorated WWII pilot, nor his exploits.

As a return favour for the visit, Billing invited the Barnetts out to his grass airstrip, just northeast of Essex. A flight in Billing's two-seater Aeronca Champ, a 65-hp dual-control aircraft, gave Rick the flying bug and he began taking flying lessons from Billing. Elsie said she was happy to sit with Billing's wife, Karen. The porch was high enough off the ground.

"I'd say, 'You'll never catch me in one of those little contraptions,'" she said.

Elsie had flown as a passenger in a commercial jet, but never in a small plane. Billing convinced her that one day she would surely like to fly with Rick, and when that day came she should know something "as a backup."

"I thought maybe he is right," Elsie said.

When Billing let her take the controls one day, Elsie discovered she had "the feel for flying."

"I was hooked — that's how it all started."

Elsie started flying lessons with Billing late in the summer of 1979. And on November 16, 1980, she experienced her first solo flight in Billing's Aeronca Champ, call sign CF-GWW.

In 1981, the Barnetts partnered with Billing to buy another Aeronca Champ, this one with the call sign CF-DFL. Then, when Rick got his flying licence, the couple decided to buy their own plane, a 1973 Bellanca Decathlon, call sign CF-GRO. The 150-hp two-seater with dual controls is capable of aerobatics; its inverted system enables it to climb 1,000 feet per minute and fly upside down for two minutes.

Elsie said Billing urged her to pursue her pilot's licence, something she achieved on March 7, 1984. Billing was a tough flight instructor, but one to respect, she said.

"With Jerry, you learnt from the best," Elsie said. "I learnt off a grass strip — a little grass strip."

Elsie had learned so well and so much, in fact, that she was urged to take part in air shows. Her first public air show was over the Detroit River for the Freedom Festival, just over three months after getting her licence. She repeated the performance the next day.

"I flew to the music *The Rose*, dedicated to my daughter Annajayne," Elsie said.

A sound system was set up so she could hear the same instrumental of the song (written by Amanda McBroom in 1978) in the cockpit, as the audience was hearing on the ground. This way she was able to choreograph her aerobatics, including loops, to the music.

Elsie's flight presentation of *The Rose* became her trademark performance and numerous shows followed.

There was some celebrity status attached to being "The Rose of the Sky." Newspapers, magazines, radio and television took an interest. A local CBC television broadcast in 1984 paid a visit to the pigs, and an article pub-

Walter Sellick stands aboard
the wing of his 1997 Zlin.

lished in 1996 hailed Elsie as the "Amelia Earhart of Southwestern Ontario" after the renowned American aviator.

In 1986, the Barnetts built their own grass strip at the family farm, located southeast of Essex on County Road 27. They moved the Decathlon to a hangar there.

Elsie made numerous performances leading up to the Windsor Air Show in 2000. But the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001 caused insurance costs to rise for all pilots and air shows. Many shows shut down, including the Windsor operation, which was only restored last year.

The Barnetts recently built a new hangar for the beloved Decathlon. Elsie, now 68, still takes to the sky. There, like the seed that becomes the rose in the song, she is not afraid to dream, to take a chance, to live, to dance "on laughter-silvered wings."

"It is a different world – the feeling is unbelievable," Elsie said. "You see the Earth in a whole new way."

Despite the passage of time and changes in people's perceptions of male and female roles, there are still many more flyboys than flygirls. Perhaps that's because it was men who first inspired boys to dream of flight. Take the thoughts of France's Jacques Charles, who took part, in 1783, in the first free flight in a manned hydrogen balloon:

"Nothing will ever equal that moment of exhilaration which filled my whole being when I felt myself flying away from the earth. It was not mere pleasure; it was perfect bliss."

As aircraft became a more common sight in the skies, boys started looking skyward to dream. That was the case for Walter Sellick of Harrow, who, as a young man in 1941, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force to serve his country. But he also had a desire to fly.

"I was delegated to ground crew," Sellick said. "Still, I thought eventually I would have an opportunity to learn to fly. Unfortunately, with the war, I never got the chance."

During the war, Sellick served at a number of Canadian airbases, most notably Gander, Newfoundland, where thousands of planes made the jump off to Europe.

"There were accidents every day," said Sellick. "It was one big hop over the Atlantic."

After the war, Sellick still dreamed of flying. In 1950, he joined the Windsor Flying Club and began to live the dream when he took his first solo flight in 1951. Sellick



Flygirl Elsie Barnett passes over the fields of Essex County in her two-seater Decathlon.



Walter Sellick in the cockpit of his 1997 Zlin.

clearly remembers the day the instructor sent him aloft for a circuit around Windsor Airport in a low-wing Piper aircraft – alone.

"I was just a bit nervous," he said. "But everything went perfectly."

In 1968, Sellick established Sellick Equipment Ltd., building heavy-duty, rough-terrain forklift trucks. As the company prospered, Sellick was able to buy his own airplane in 1970 – a low-wing, four-seater Beech Sundowner. He would use it for business and pleasure.

In 1998, when Sellick turned 80, he joined a select group of flyers – the United Flying Octogenarians (UFO). Started by 25 aviators in 1982, it now boasts over 600 members around the world. Sellick served as president for two and a half years.

Sellick always kept his aircraft hangared at Windsor Airport. At age 87, he built his own hangar there to house his latest aircraft, a 1997 Zlin, a two-seater featuring rugged all-metal construction.

Annual social events for pilots called "fly-ins" have always been a favourite pastime for Sellick. Over the years he has flown to numerous locations in North America. In November, he plans to fly to Long Beach, California, to attend the annual UFO Convention.

"You meet an awful lot of nice people in flying," said Sellick, who, at 92, believes age is only a number.

"As far as I know, I am the second-oldest pilot to be still flying in Canada."

Today, flyboys and flygirls of all ages continue to fulfill their dream of flight. Look skyward some day and you might just see them dancing in the sunlit sky "on laughter-silvered wings."



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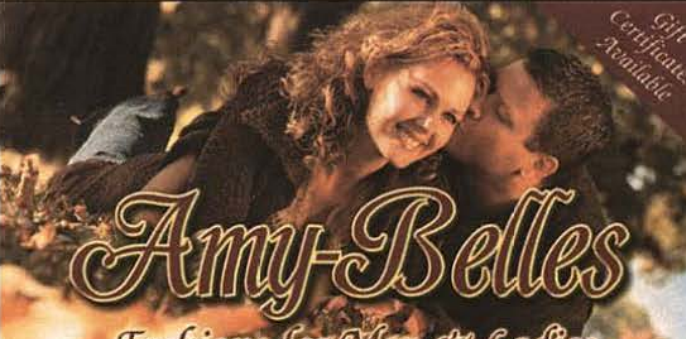
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CASTLES OF GRAIN

Grain silos, no longer in operation, stand high above the urban area of Essex.

Essex County's rural outposts

By Andy Comber

Large towers reach into Essex County skies, like the turrets of a mighty castle. But it was grain that built these castles – silos that stand as monuments to the co-operative movement.

The idea of co-operation dates far back in human history, to a time when people organized for mutual benefit. Founded in 1844, the Rochdale Society is considered the first successful co-operative. A group of weavers in Rochdale, England, established the society and opened their own store to make food items more affordable. Within ten years, there were over 1,000 co-operative societies in the United Kingdom.

After World War One, farming remained the primary industry in Essex County. It was the farm community that was at the centre of the local co-operative movement.

Successful co-operatives were developed in large agricultural centres, Harrow and Essex standing out among them. The Harrow Farmers Co-operative Association was formed by 44 members in 1919. Essex Farmers Limited got its start that same year.

Harrow Farmers expanded rapidly into all sorts of ventures, including coal, hardware, grain, feed and livestock. It was, at one time, the agency for the Essex and Hudson motorcars.

Essex Farmers was much the same; they sold Ford farm equipment and cars.

In 1947, Essex County saw the formation of the first Francophone co-operative – La Co-operative de Pointe-aux-Roches – known to the English-speaking community as the Stoney Point co-op.

As times changed, co-op products and services changed. Fuel was offered, and large grain silos and dryers were constructed. At harvest time, long lines of tractors with their grain wagons would assemble at the grain silos. These were the rural outposts of Essex County.

Many grain operations were located in the centre of local towns. This became a problem as urban development closed in around them. Most co-ops were also located along the railroad tracks for easy shipment. This was true even in the small communities of McGregor, Oldcastle, Staples, Comber and Maidstone.

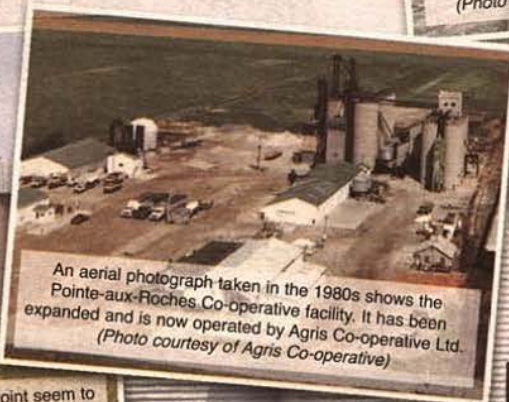
Over time, farming evolved and co-operatives evolved with them. Farms and their farm equipment, combines and harvesters, became larger. But there were difficult times too. Fires and other tragedies – and tough economic times.



The Essex Farmers Limited co-operative building as it looked in the late 1940s. (Photo courtesy of Heritage Essex)



Workers pack seed bags at the Essex Farmers co-operative, circa 1940s. (Photo courtesy of Heritage Essex)



An aerial photograph taken in the 1980s shows the Pointe-aux-Roches Co-operative facility. It has been expanded and is now operated by Agnis Co-operative Ltd. (Photo courtesy of Agnis Co-operative)



The large concrete silos at Stoney Point seem to have sprouted from the cornfield. The silos were once operated by the Pointe-aux-Roches Co-operative, the first Francophone co-op in Essex County. It merged with Orford Co-operative in 2006 to form Agnis Co-operative Ltd.

A farmer works a field near Staples, where grain, seed and fertilizer operations are still active. Steel bins, able to hold greater volumes of grain, are replacing the concrete silos of the past.



A rail siding that once served Comber now sits idle, joining the co-op grain elevators, left, and the Comber railroad station.

An undated photo shows the Comber Co-op silos when they were still in use. Grain is now hauled to the bigger operation at Point-aux-Roches operated by Agris Co-operative.

A thistle sheds its seeds in the shadow of two concrete silos, the remaining monuments marking the location of the Oldcastle Co-op. The railway line that once served the co-op closed in the early 1990s.

A faded picture, circa 1940s, shows two rail lines serving the Oldcastle Co-operative. The concrete silos that remain at the site were not built when this picture was taken.
(Photo courtesy of Agris Co-operative)

Essex Farmers became a victim of the 1980s recession, going into receivership in 1981 and closing its operations in 1982. Only the large grain silos stand today.

Many of Essex County's railways were hurting too. The last train passed through Harrow in 1991 on the Chesapeake and Ohio line. Trucking was replacing rail as a cheaper and more versatile mode of transportation.

By 1992, the only independent co-operatives were Harrow Farmers and Pointe-aux-Roches. The latter prevailed. Some co-op properties were sold to private enterprises. Others closed as grain operations were consolidated. Location near major highways became more important than rail.

In 2006, La Co-operative de Pointe-aux-Roches merged with Orford Co-operative Limited to form Agris Co-operative, which is still a farmer-driven organization. Today, grain operations are fewer in number but modern facilities can handle far more volume. Co-operatives continue to evolve with the times.

Castles of grain – those from bygone days and those at the new rural outposts – continue to dot our local landscape and stand tall as monuments to the co-operative movement.

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Spotlight on the Past

Lost communities of Essex County

By Chris Carter and Andy Comber

You arrive at the crossroads and close your eyes. Sounds of yesterday travel on the wind. The blacksmith strikes the anvil, horses exhale, their hooves heavy on the ground, wagons creak, a saw slides back and forth on wooden logs. In the distance, a ship's bell rings and a train halts, steam hissing.

These are the sounds of the past. They belong to lost communities – places that are merely shadows of their former selves or ghosts of the thriving centres they once were.

Essex County has numerous such places – Arner, Albertville, Union, Splitlog, Elford, Olinda. Located at crossroads, sometimes at a port of call, or inland by the rail, many of the communities boasted services that no longer exist – schools, churches, stagecoach stops, general stores and post offices. Today, for some, their small populations are no longer allowed dots on the map. They are becoming shadows, ghosts of the past.

Two hundred years ago, Essex County was dense with trees. Its flat interior terrain was marshy, discouraging settlement anywhere but close to the shoreline. Ports along Lake Erie hummed with activity in the 19th century, developing wherever there was trade and commerce – wherever there were goods, crops and resources to fill the holds of ships.

By 1810, a Lake Erie port had developed at the end of Graham Side Road, a ready supply route in Gosfield Township, which gave it its name. Leamington and Kingsville did not yet exist and Colchester was too far away to serve local farmers.

When the post office opened on October 16, 1831, under Postmaster Peter Scratch, the port was named Albertville, in honour of Queen Victoria's beloved husband, Prince Albert.

By 1850, Albertville's population had reached the 100 mark. It was a thriving community with a school and many small businesses including a blacksmith's shop, a gristmill, a tannery, and a carpenter's shop. A Mr. Strong owned the general store and a Mr. Lovelace operated the boot and shoe shop.

To the north, the interior of the township was gradually being cleared and occu-

pied. Much of the work was being done by discharged soldiers who were given land to reward them for their service to the Crown. Families with names well known today – Bruner, Tofflemire, Fox and Wigle – were among the first to settle the area.

The increased trade meant larger cargos, and larger ships to carry them, would arrive and depart from Albertville. The water was too shallow for the larger ships to reach the docks, so they would be loaded or unloaded from barges, doubling the work.

Albertville reached its peak in the 1850s and a new dock was established in deeper waters less than two kilometres to the east. Ruthven, only a kilometre to the north, lent its name to the dock. But the community would be known as Union-on-the-Lake, or simply Union.

Thanks to a federal government grant, Henry Wigle was able to build a more substantial dock at Union in 1872. It meant prosperity for Union and the demise of Albertville. In 1882, a Capt. Ives improved Union's dock, adding to its length and structure.

Developments just north of Ruthven were also driving the economy of the region. About 10 kilometres inland, at the "Back Settlement," landowner George Bruner had discovered an iron bog. He promptly invited the Colbourne Iron Works Company to set up a foundry. They did, and, in turn, the growing hamlet became known as Colbourne.

The iron business brought nicknames for the community. It was known as "Furnace," for obvious reasons, and "Stag Town," supposedly referring to the many single men that lived and worked there.

The community thrived in its early years. Located on a natural gravel ridge, it was on the Indian trail that stretched from Sandwiche Towne at the Detroit River to the Niagara Peninsula. During the 1820s, Col. Thomas Talbot laid his overland route, the Talbot Trail, at Colbourne's doorstep. By the 1830s, there were about 800 residents at Colbourne – a population that rivaled many other Essex County communities.

When the post office came to Colbourne around 1856, the furnaces were gone. There were richer ore deposits elsewhere. One resident, Michael Wigle, had been reading about Indians and suggested a new name for the community. Olinda, an Indian name, is said to mean "land of plenty."

Olinda was a land of plenty, but with the ore depleted, industry shifted to agriculture. Unfortunately, distiller Hiram Walker's railroad did not come to the community. By the late 1880s, the federal government decided the best places for its docks were in the growing communities of Kingsville and Leamington. Both had natural harbours, rail and many other services. Everything added up to decline for Olinda and Union.

Olinda is Essex County's only true ghost town. Although

Broom factory outbuilding – Olinda
(Photo: Chris Carter)

An old barn pillar rests on the shore of Albertville.

A map of Gosfield Township from 1880

other communities have vanished from the map, it is a severe loss of population that creates ghost towns. By the late 1870s and 1880s, Olinda boasted three churches, a school, a blacksmith's shop, a barbershop, and two country stores, one with a post office. At its peak, the population reached about 900. Today, Olinda's population hovers around 25.

Union's population is greater today, but its purpose has changed. By 1940, the dock was in ruins but the community grew as a residential area, with cottages and homes. More a bedroom community today, it is Union's once thriving port that has slipped into the shadows.

Inland, numerous communities tried to establish themselves by mid-century. For many, a crossroad was all that defined them. They served the local farmers, perhaps boasting a general store with a post office, a school and churches.

In 1873, the Canada Southern Railroad laid tracks diagonally across the county, from Tilbury in the northeast, through Essex and McGregor, to Amherstburg in the southwest. Railroads meant prosperity.

This dramatically changed the development of Colchester Township and opened the interior. Farmland was wanted,

but first the vast forests in Essex County would have to be cleared.

John Edgar founded a lumber centre, first called Kilroy, but later known as Edgar Mills, or simply Edgar. It was located on the Canadian Southern line, between Concession 12 and 13 in Colchester North. A store and a railroad station were built.

Prosperity seemed certain, but as the trees disappeared so too did the community's reason for being. It is interesting to note that Edgars still appears on some maps in local telephone directories – but you will only find shadows of the community it once was.

Essex County holds many more lost communities – Albuna, Bugletown, Klondike, New California, Salem, Zion. The list is long. Although our hamlets, towns and cities continue to evolve, history teaches that the future is always uncertain.

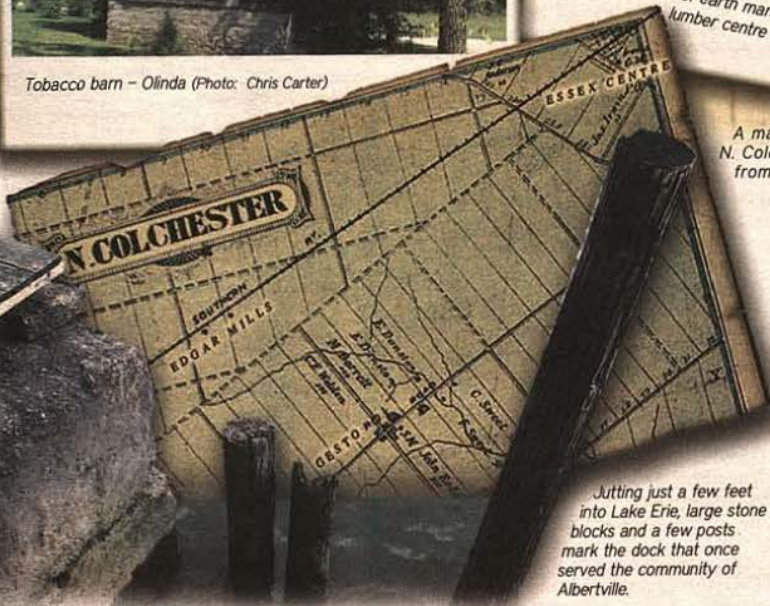
Some communities may thrive, others may vanish like ghosts.



Tobacco barn – Olinda (Photo: Chris Carter)



An unusual mound of earth marks the site of Edgar Mills, a thriving lumber centre in the late 1800s



A map of N. Colchester from 1880

Jutting just a few feet into Lake Erie, large stone blocks and a few posts mark the dock that once served the community of Albertville.



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PAGES from the PAST

HISTORIC ESSEX COUNTY NEWSPAPERS GO ONLINE

By Art Rhyno

On March 10, 1849, James A. Reeves published the inaugural issue of the *Amherstburg Courier and Western District Advertiser*, a newspaper "devoted to news, literature, agriculture, miscellaneous intelligence, and amusement." The newspaper was the first in Amherstburg and would become part of a rich newspaper tradition throughout Essex County.

Early newspapers like the *Amherstburg Courier* carried information culled from other newspapers, advertisements, local news, and even occasional advice for readers. In the April 4, 1849 issue of the *Courier*, for example, young girls were described as "unwise when they suppose outward decoration make the man, and are carried away with a fine coat, a stiff collar, a forced smile, and a dozen polite bows." The article further advised: "Search the heart, and if you find nothing but rubbish there, don't fall in a love with a popinjay."

Katharine Ball, a librarian at the Leddy Library, University of Windsor, includes the *Amherstburg Courier* in a list of more than 80 newspapers that were published in Essex County before 1960, and among 25 titles that are candidates for microfilm digitization – a process where newspaper microfilm reels are processed into digital form.

"Most of these newspapers were published in English or French and many only lasted a few years," she says. "Unfortunately, for approximately a quarter of the titles, there seems to be no issues that have survived. For many others only the odd issue exists."

Working with Our Ontario, a provincial information sharing initiative coordinated by Knowledge Ontario, the Leddy Library is making many thousands of newspaper pages freely available on the web, starting with the *Essex Free Press*, which dates back to 1895. The pages can be searched and read with a web browser at <http://ink.ourontario.ca>. These early community newspapers reveal a treasure trove of details about local history and local perspectives on national and international events.

"The digitization efforts aim to help preserve what remains, while greatly improving access to these valuable historical documents," says Ball. "Web delivery will make it really fast and convenient for researchers to uncover and explore the incredibly rich history of one of the oldest settled areas in Ontario."

Anyone who has dealt with microfilm will immediately appreciate digital formats. Sharon Mulcaster of Essex holds a Professional Learning Certificate in Genealogical Studies. She shepherded many reels of the *Leamington Post* through the scanning process and knows only too well the constraints that microfilm imposes on readers.

"Genealogists rely heavily on microfilmed newspapers," Mulcaster says. "But microfilm readers are often tricky to use, the images are hard to read, and the information is often difficult to locate."

Mulcaster, who maintains a local history website called The Old Time Corner (<http://oldtimecorner.ca>), a spin-off of the *Essex Free Press* column that she has penned regularly, has spent more hours than she cares to count working with microfilm.

"Some of the best stories from a community end up hidden in one of the world's worst formats. Microfiche and microfilm machines are cranky at best and I suspect there are lots of people who will never get to experience the value of the old newspapers unless they are made accessible on the web."

From Weak Blood and Miraculous Pills to Supporting the War Effort

Some of the most interesting materials in historic newspapers come from advertisements. In the late 1800s through to the Second World War, all manner of pills, tonics and ointments could be ordered for every ailment, especially for improving blood quality, dealing with nervous conditions, and overcoming fatigue. These "medicines" were typically endorsed with letters from happy customers who often lived well outside of the community. For example, Paine's

Health advertisements from the late 1800s and early 1900s – The *Essex Free Press*.

HOLD MEMORIAL SERVICE

The memorial service honouring the late Frederick M. Taylor, son of Mrs. M. Taylor and the late Mrs. Taylor, who was lost at sea while on active service, as a member of the crew of the Destroyer H.M.C.S. Ottawa, which was torpedoed on September 13th last, held in the Town Hall, on Sunday afternoon, was attended by a large number of local citizens. The order of service was as follows: The National Anthem; a few words from Mayor Frank Irwin on behalf of the people of Essex; a hymn; Scripture reading; Rev. John Hunter; a solo, "O Love, 'Till We Meet Again," dedicated to the bereaved and anxious hearts, by Mrs. H. Manningsham, accompanied by Mrs. J. A. Nightingale; prayer, Rev. J. H. Wheeler; hymn; address, Rev. C. W. D. Cosenar; Last Post, Bells; hymn; 2 minutes' silence; Rev. J. H. Wheeler; and the benediction.

WORD FROM GERMANY

Mr. and Mrs. Len Boultinghouse received the following letter from their son Bert, who is a prisoner of war in Germany:

September 9th, 1942.

Dearest Mother:
I am in the best of health, hope this finds all at home the same. Wrote a letter about a week ago, hope you received it. Have received a few Red Cross parcels, which sure helps out very much. Could use a few socks, tooth brush, towel, razor and blades. Was told that the Red Cross would inform folks at home how to send parcels and what to send in them. Weather has been very nice. Getting fed well and have rather good beds. Expect it will take plenty of time for letters to reach back and forth.

Only wish I could write all I wanted to say but a person can only do next best, if you know what I mean.

Loads of love to all.
Your Soldier Son,
BERT.

ANOTHER LOCAL BOY KILLED

Mr. and Mrs. Hethel Croft, of Sandwich South, have been officially notified that their son, Pte. George, Wesley P. Croft, of the R.C.A.F., was killed on the night of October 10th, while on a bombing raid over enemy territory.

Was born in Sandwich North and lived there all his life, until enlisting in the R.C.A.F. two years ago. He is a graduate of St. Michael's School, Sandwich, and his parents, two sisters and five children.

The sympathy of the whole community goes out to the bereaved family.

Local connections to the global conflict appear in this page from the October 30, 1942 edition of The *Essex Free Press*. Here, a description of a recent memorial service is presented as well as a letter from a prisoner of war in Germany to his parents, and news of a local soldier's death.

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Price \$2000

Price \$2010

Price \$2020

Price \$2030

Price \$2040

Price \$2050

Price \$2060

Price \$2070

Price \$2080

Price \$2090

Price \$2100

Price \$2110

Price \$2120

Price \$2130

Price \$2140

Price \$2150

Price \$2160

Price \$2170

Price \$2180

Price \$2190

Price \$2200

Price \$2210

Price \$2220

Price \$2230

Price \$2240

Price \$2250

Price \$2260

Price \$2270

Price \$2280

Price \$2290

Price \$2300

Price \$2310

Price \$2320

Price \$2330

Price \$2340

Celery Compound was verified by no less than a Justice of the Peace in Nova Scotia in an ad published in *The Essex Free Press* on December 18, 1896. A mere five bottles of the compound would allegedly treat a number of serious stomach problems and acute head pains.

The focus of advertising took a serious turn during the First and Second World Wars, when the Canadian government issued Victory Bonds to generate badly needed funds to finance military operations. Victory Bonds appealed to the reader's conscience and sense of patriotism, and many companies included their endorsement of the bonds in their ads.

Advertising also reflected the times. It is hard to imagine an ad campaign like Picobac Tobacco's "Santa Claus knows what every man likes" – used in the 1930s to sell pipe tobacco – evoking anything but massive outrage today. But old newspapers often perfectly captured the mindset and sensitivities of other bygone eras.

The Struggle to Survive

Like many businesses, newspaper publishers have often had to struggle to survive. On October 16, 1838, the editor of the *Western Herald*, a newspaper that served the village of Sandwich from 1838-1842, made the following appeal:

"We have toiled unceasingly ever since we had the misfortune to cast our lot among a community of idlers, under the most trying and discouraging circumstances in the hope that our assiduity, economy and perseverance would, at no distant period, meet with their accustomed reward, viz., patronage and suitable remuneration, but, alas! We have reckoned without our hosts. Tell it not in Gath – publish it not in the streets of Askelon that we have printed the Western Herald for 33 months for barely 150 subscribers. Can it be supposed that we can or will be fool enough to waste our time, health, peace of mind and bodily labour for another year in the manner we have done for so contemptible a number of subscribers."

Abolitionist Newspapers in Essex County

In 1851, Henry Bibb, a former slave from Kentucky who escaped via Detroit and founded a newspaper called *The Voice of the Fugitive* in Sandwich, persuaded a remarkable teacher from Delaware named Mary Ann Shadd to set up a school in Windsor. Shadd had a strong track record as a teacher in African-American schools and had been a frequent contributor to abolitionist publications. She soon saw great promise in Canada and, in her writings, she encouraged Black Americans to pursue a future north of the border.

Shadd's strong belief in integrated schools

"When the writer of the leading editorial in the Voice [of the Fugitive] of Feb. 22 shall be in the mood of it, we should like

to go into facts historical, proving to whom such epithets as "unprincipled calumniator", "syren," &c., legitimately belong. There is an adage about folks in glass houses, &c. And more than one person has seen stones thrown in Windsor." – The Provincial Freeman, March 24, 1853

soon clashed with Bibb's support for separate schools for Black children. Partially as a result of some unflattering descriptions of Shadd in *The Voice of the Fugitive*, the first issue of *The Provincial Freeman* was printed in Windsor in March 1853. With this newspaper, Shadd became the first Black female publisher in North America and the first female publisher in Canada. She was aware of how groundbreaking her publication was, and the newspaper was careful to list one of the frequent contributors, Samuel Ringgold Ward, as the editor in the first year. Ward was a well-respected orator and writer, but it became clear that the force behind *The Provincial Freeman* was Shadd. Soon, nearly all correspondence to the newspaper would be addressed "To the Editress of the Provincial Freeman."

In her newspaper, Shadd would report on slavery issues in the United States, the activities of abolitionist groups, and highlight the successes of Black Americans in Canada. She never wavered in her opinion, and her strength of character would impact many lives even after closing down *The Provincial Freeman* in 1857. Shadd would return to the States and become a recruiting officer for Blacks for the Union Army at the outbreak of the Civil War. She would later graduate from law school and work for the women's suffrage movement, becoming the first Black woman to cast a vote in a U.S. national election.

A Sometimes Fragile and Brittle Record

Newspapers, like most paper products, can deteriorate quickly and are highly susceptible to factors like dampness and humidity. Many of the newspapers processed by Our Ontario begin the conversion as a stack of microfilm reels, some of them containing pages that are in very poor condition. Loren Fantin, project manager for Our Ontario, points out that microfilm quality and volume are very significant when working with newspaper titles.

"The quality of the microfilm source can vary widely. The reel may be scratched from constant use, and the images on the microfilm itself are subject to lighting conditions and the sheer physical quality of the newspaper at the point it was photographed to

WW1 and WW2 Victory Bonds Advertisements - from The Essex Free Press.

make the microfilm."

Fantin estimates that a newspaper page can represent 2,000 to 3,000 words, and a century-old weekly publication can represent many thousands of pages. The volume of data can be overwhelming for computer systems and the people who manage them.

"The key is to find ways to stay afloat when the numbers start adding up. Only e-mail creates more text than newspapers today, and nothing matches newspapers for the amount of text generated in previous decades."

Our Ontario has worked with newspaper images from sources other than microfilm. The Leddy Library project brings forward several decades worth of microfiche, which tends to be better for producing legible text and poorer for producing clear pictures in newspapers.

As images are digitized, they are processed by an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) program, a software application that attempts to extract text from the image itself. Even though the text is not always accurate, the OCR is critical for making the collection searchable and it tends to be a very intensive and slow process. A newspaper reel typically provides 800 to 1200 images, and takes 8 to 10 hours to process on a single computer with state of the art OCR software. The Leddy Library leverages its base of public computers during the library's closed hours to bump up the number of machines participating in the OCR processing. The library anticipates that at least 250,000 pages of Essex County newspaper content will be brought together as a result of the partnership with Our Ontario.

Looking Forward to Pages from the Past

For those interested in local history, gaining access to historic newspapers will be a boon and a much-welcomed alternative to spending hours staring at microfilm. For anyone exploring family connections, the newspapers will offer a wealth of data on family marriages, deaths, and public gatherings. For researchers in general, newspapers capture the profile of a community in unique ways and are primary source materials for the day-to-day activities of previous generations.

At their best, newspapers offer a unique and illuminating insight into the events that shape a community. The words of William Balfour and John Auld, founders of *The Amherstburg Echo*, continue to guide many of this county's oldest newspapers. In their publication's introductory description in 1874, they wrote:

"[W]e shall give a faithful record of all matters of public interest, irrespective of their bearing on one party or the other. In the discussion of all questions we shall undertake to engage those who differ from us in a courteous manner and shall carefully abstain from all personal abuse, which convinces none and tends to excite their opposition."

The list below contains newspapers that were published in Essex County, with the exception of the *Marine Record*, a shipping publication out of Cleveland that covered the Great Lakes, including areas along the shores of Essex County. The *Essex Free Press*, *Kingsville Reporter*, *Leamington Post* and *Amherstburg Echo* continue to record the living history of our county as community weekly newspapers.

The Amherstburg Courier and Western District
Advertiser 1849-1850
The Amherstburg Echo 1874 to present
Le Canadien 1891
Canadian Emigrant and Western District
Advertiser 1831-1836
Le Courrier 1908-1909
Courrier D'Essex 1884-1885
Le Courrier De L'Ouest 1885-1886
La Defense 1918-1920
La Drapeau National 1891-1892
The Essex Free Press 1895 to present
Essex Record 1860-1918

L'Independent Du Canada 1891-1892
The Kingsville Reporter 1876 to present
The Leamington Post 1874 to present
Marine Record 1883-1902
The Provincial Freeman 1853-1857
True Royalist 1860-1861
Walkerville Mercury 1890-1891
Walkerville News 1922-1936
Western Herald (Sandwich) 1838-1869
Windsor Evening Record 1890-1918
Windsor Herald 1838-1842
The Voice of the Fugitive 1851-1852

As of August 2010, about 50,000 pages have been made available. Some holdings are incomplete. The digitized newspapers are appearing at the following sites as they are processed:

Our Ontario Community Newspaper site – <http://ink.ourontario.ca>
(Also includes other Ontario newspapers.)

South Western Ontario Digital Archive – <http://swoda.uwindsor.ca>
(Website to be launched Fall 2010. Also includes books, postcards and other historical materials, as well as a list of newspaper titles published in Essex County before 1960.)

Gates to Burn

By Sharon Mulcaster

"There should never have been a tollgate on this continent to incite the evil passions of naturally good citizens and lead them to the crime of arson."

— *Detroit Journal* (July 25, 1896)

The burning of the tollgates is memorialized in a mural painted on the back of Grand Central Tavern in Essex, facing the public parking lot.

The virtues of a village called Essex Centre were published in the October 3, 1872 edition of the *Essex Record*. Yet, in 1881, when the *Essex Chronicle* published a history of Essex, there was not one reference to the man who had extolled its virtues so highly just nine years earlier.

Alexander Cameron had laid out the streets and property lots in Essex, had opened two sawmills and built a train station. He had moved Mr. Thornton's hotel at Gosfield Townline – which he called the Essex Centre Canada Southern Railway Hotel, later known as the Royal Hotel – to the property beside the railway tracks, where the Essex Legion sits today. Once known as the "Earl of Essex", Cameron, despite his illustrious contributions, started something that raised so much indignation that it may have turned the historical record against him.

Would Alexander Cameron have been given some recognition as the founder of the town had he not built the tollgates in Essex?

"Four blackened patches of earth mark the sides of four tollgates on the old Talbot gravel road at and near Essex, and today the traveller journeys free along the roads. In the vicinity of the scene of the destruction there are no signs of grief at the devastation wrought; there is indeed a merry little twinkle in the eye of the average wayfarer as he passes with impunity the spot where formerly he had to dive into his pocket." — *Toronto Globe*, July 25, 1896

In the late 19th century, toll roads were not new to Essex County. The old Talbot and Sandwich road was built in the 1850s to connect Sandwich – then the administrative and political centre for the district that included the Counties of Essex, Kent and Lambton – with communities to the east.

The first tolls along Talbot Road were taken in 1856.

The company that built the road – the Sandwich

Street Plank Road Company – was sold first to Charles Baby of Sandwich, and later sold to an associate, Alexander Cameron, following Baby's death. In 1878 or 1879, the company became a joint stock company known as the Talbot Street Gravel Road Company.

Holding the lease to Talbot Road, Cameron collected tolls at Grand Marais and also at Walker Road. In 1872 he made the decision to build two more tollgates – one at Gosfield Townline in Essex, and another at Malden Road in Maidstone. Cameron, and later his estate, collected a five-cent toll from users of the road, which was neglected and often impassable in wet weather. Townspeople and area farmers grew to resent his name. Mr. Lovelace, editor of the *Essex Free Press* in 1895, referred to Talbot Road as "Cameron's Creek" – too dirty for bathing and not deep enough for navigation.

The tollgates were so despised that, in 1895, two years after Cameron's death, John Milne provided land to build a "bypass" which was completed in record time before anyone from the gravel company could get to Essex to stop it. That bypass is the part of today's Irwin Avenue, from Fairview Avenue to Gosfield Townline and then east until it hooks back up with Talbot. Once the bypass road was built, receipts at the tollgate dropped to about 50 cents a week and, for the remainder of 1895, it appeared that the Talbot Street Gravel Road Company had abandoned the gate.

In January 1896, Essex Mayor P. A. Dewar received word from the Cameron Estate that Talbot Road had been leased to a man named Cornwall, who had been given orders to build "check" gates at every street in town crossing the "creek" to catch those using the bypass.

Work began on an Arthur Avenue tollgate, but every morning the workmen arrived only to find all the work they had done the previous day torn down. They persisted for one week and then, with no progress made, abandoned the plan.

LIGHTNING DID IT.

**The New West End Toll Gate
A Victim of the Elements.**

About eleven o' clock on Wednesday night, the cry of fire rang through the streets. A few people heard it but as the official alarm was not given, not much attention was paid to it. It proved however, that the new toll house at the west end was being consumed, it is said as a visitation of the powers that be, by the devouring element. The agony was not long drawn out, and no regrets are recorded. Various opinions are hazarded, as to the origin of the blaze, but all good people unite in saying it was "struck by lightning." Other dark hints are afloat, but they are libelous, and it is dangerous to repeat them.

News clipping:
Essex Free Press, May 29, 1896

Cornwall's next plan was to build a new gate at the west end of town by moving a small 12x14-foot house to the Maidstone Avenue crossing. This location would not be as easily avoided as the eastern gate and would cut off free access from the more populated west end of town.

At 11 o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, May 27, the cry of "fire" rang through the streets of Essex. The new tollgate was consumed with fire as everyone, including the Essex Fire Brigade, ignored the alarm.

"The agony was not long drawn out, and no regrets are recorded," stated a brief article in the *Essex Free Press* (May 29, 1896). "Various opinions are hazarded as to the origin of the blaze, but all good people unite in saying it was 'struck by lightning.' Other dark hints are afloat, but they are libelous, and it is dangerous to repeat them."

The west end tollgate was gone, but Cornwall defiantly declared his plan to build a stronger, fireproof one at Maidstone Avenue. It was completed on July 16 and Cornwall, with a constable by his side, happily collected tolls for six days – but not without tensions.

Churchgoers were exempt from the five-cent toll, but that didn't stop Cornwall from allegedly cross-examining a couple of ladies on their way to church. He questioned the honesty of one woman and threatened another with prosecution for trying to avoid paying tolls. At Maidstone Cross, tensions mounted further when Father McGee took steps to prevent tollgate keeper Edward Welch from being served alcohol at local hotels. Welch was reportedly "well thrashed" by Father McGee for using strong language during a confrontation. The next time the priest went through the tollgate,

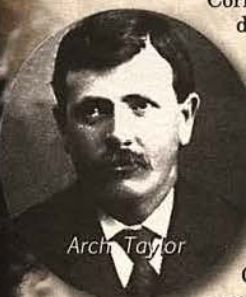
Cornwall threatened the priest with prosecution if he didn't pay the toll.

It was at this point that the tollgate nuisance became intolerable and plans to resolve the matter were made at the Aberdeen Hotel. The names of only a few of those involved have been uncovered, but local legend says there were about 10 to 12 men, including Robert Ellis, Charles "Nip" Little, Henry O'Connor and Archibald Taylor of Maidstone.

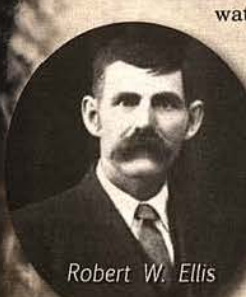
John Wortley of Gosfield was picked to be Captain. Secrecy was imperative as the penalty for arson was life in prison. Seventeen-year-old Roll Robinson was too young to take part but said he was watching nearby.

On the evening of Tuesday, July 21, the men went to MacDougall's Livery Stable, which provided horses, wagons and drivers. Necessary supplies were gathered and the men blackened their faces, turned their coats inside out, put on slouch hats and old shoes, and rolled up one pant leg, letting the other drag in the dirt.

The families of Arch Taylor and Robert Ellis have confirmed that they were among the men who set fire to the toll gates.



Arch Taylor



Robert W. Ellis

At 8 p.m. some boys started throwing rocks at the Maidstone Avenue tollgate house with Cornwall and Mr. Tweedale, the gatekeeper, inside. The rock throwing continued until 10 p.m. when the disguised men arrived to demolish the building. It was reported that half the town's population gathered to cheer the men on as they escorted Cornwall and Tweedale out and then set the gatehouse on fire.

The destruction continued at Maidstone Cross. The men climbed on the roof of Nace Halford's store and Harry North's hotel to keep them watered down and safe from fire as the tollgate burned. Afterwards, North invited the men in for a drink before they headed out to burn the next tollgate at Walker Road. The two ladies at the Oldcastle tollgate were so frightened at the sight of the disguised men that they ran off into the woods. It would take two days to find them.

The men left the east gate at Essex for another day, as the new gatekeeper, Mrs. Gasco, was ill. Mrs. Gasco moved out of the east end tollgate the next day. The plan to eliminate the tollgates in and near Essex was completed on Sunday, July 26 when the final tollgate was burned to the ground.

Cornwall and a representative of the Cameron Estate said they were determined to prosecute the offenders but not one person, young or old, could be found who would identify any of those involved. No charges were ever laid.

Sources: Newspaper archives including *Essex Free Press*, *Detroit Journal*, *Toronto Globe*, *Windsor Star*, *Windsor Record*, and *Essex Record*. Evelyn Couch Walker, *The Three Rs of Essex: Riches, Rags, Recovery*. Grace Joyce, *History of Gosfield*. Patrick Brode, *Alexander Cameron and the Flowering of the County of Essex, 1853-1893*, *Essex County Historical Society, Occasional papers* (Windsor), no.4 (1987). Interviews with Orpha Dutot about Robert Ellis, and Frank Taylor about Archibald Taylor.

News Clipping:
Essex Free Press, July 24, 1896

Three Eyesores Gone.

The Talbot Street Gravel Road Co. met with a loss on Tuesday night when their toll gate houses at the north-west end of town, at Maidstone and at Oldcastle, were destroyed by fire. The two latter have been standing for a long time but the former was only built last week, toll being collected there for the first time on Thursday before it was burned down. The company's loss removes three eyesores to the people of this part of the county and we hope the day is not far distant when the gates will be discarded and this road made a free value in the house at Essex, and at the other houses nearly all the contents were removed in time. The flames did not approach any other buildings. We have no word if the buildings were insured or not. There is no doubt but that the buildings were set on fire, the Essex one going first, then the one at Maidstone and the Oldcastle one last. Had the new lessee of the road not aggravated the people in this section of the county by persisting in having a gate just at the entrance to the town, in fact within the town limits, there would not likely have been a fire that night. People are used now to travelling on free roads and not being compelled to stop and pay a toll of five cents and upwards every time they desire to go to or from a town. The *Detroit Free Press* in an item on Thursday morning said a lot of ammonia had been thrown into the building at Essex. From what we have been able to learn, this statement is not true. No attempt was made to injure the occupants of the houses at Maidstone and Oldcastle but they were assisted to get their goods out. There is still one gate between Essex and Windsor.

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Natural Treasures of Essex County

Marriette Preyde and her Pawpaw

From Forgotten Past to Future Possibilities: The Pawpaw

By Dan Bissonnette

*Pickin' up paw-paws, put 'em in a basket.
Pickin' up paw-paws, put 'em in a basket.
Pickin' up paw-paws, put 'em in a basket.
Way down yonder in the paw-paw patch.*

Some of us may know this old folk song, which originated in the American south. What many people may not know is exactly what this song is referring to. Many more might even be surprised to learn that the subject of this song is a native plant species found right here in Essex County.

The Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) is a small, slender tree found throughout much of the eastern United States, as well as southern Ontario. The name "Pawpaw" likely originated from early American settlers, who sometimes mistook its fruits for papayas. This name can be applied to the tree or the fruit that it produces. This species also goes by other names, including Custard Apple, Hooser Banana and Michigan Banana, as well as the names of several other American states that each lay claim to it.

The Pawpaw is usually found in protected wooded areas, typically in deep, loose, organic soils. These trees can slowly colonize and form groves or patches. Pawpaws were, no doubt, more plentiful before the widespread clearing of forests, but there are still several sites remaining in Essex County. Indigenous specimens have been documented in the municipalities of Amherstburg, Kingsville, Leamington and Lakeshore, and there may yet be undiscovered Pawpaws elsewhere in the county.

The fruit of the Pawpaw is one of this species' identifying features. When ripe, it has a yellowish-green colour with a variable oval shape. A mature Pawpaw has an average size of 10 centimetres (4 inches), making this the largest of any native fruit in Canada. Its flavour is both distinct and complex. Those who have tasted this fruit have used a variety of descriptions, with comparisons that include custard, banana, apple, strawberry and peach.

Although this fruit has been largely forgotten throughout its Canadian range, it continues to be a recognized food source for aboriginals, farm families and rural residents throughout the eastern United States. Unlike apples and other orchard fruit, however, Pawpaws do not ripen consistently and the shelf life of the raw fruit is limited. As a result, Pawpaws have never caught on as a large-scale agricultural crop.

Despite their limitations in conventional agriculture, Pawpaws have some admirable characteristics. The tree's restrained growth and large, tropical-looking leaves make it a unique landscape option. It is remarkably free of pests and diseases and requires practically no pruning. Furthermore, research conducted with-

Close-up of a
Pawpaw
fruit.

Native Plant Sale!

Saturday, September 18
9:00 AM until 1:00 PM

Get introduced to the fascinating world of native plants and get some end-of-season bargains at the same time! Check out a great selection of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers produced by our county's best native plant growers.

This one day event will take place at the
Maidstone Recreation Centre, on County Road 34,
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in the last 20 years has cast this quiet species in a more prominent light. Based on findings from Kentucky State University, we know that Pawpaws are high in vitamin C, magnesium, iron and other vitamins. They are also a rich source of essential amino acids and have been found to have antioxidant properties that are comparable to blueberries.

With these recent discoveries, could the Pawpaw have a place in the backyards of Essex County? Henry Driedger, who has been growing Pawpaws and other native plants on his family farm in the Municipality of Leamington for over 20 years, feels they do. Although he cautions against planting them in heavy clay and recommends some wind protection, he has seen these trees flourish in a landscape setting. A young Pawpaw he planted in his yard 12 years ago has since grown to a height of 3.5 metres (12 feet). It started bearing fruit after several years and now provides abundant fruit each year.

"My Pawpaws don't have any disease problems," says Driedger. "Last year I picked enough fruit from that one tree to fill two 11-quart baskets."

Yet more than simply an option for the backyard, this species has shown promise as a source of income. The Pawpaw has found renewed interest among small-scale and alternative growers in Ohio, where the fresh fruit is sold at roadside fruit stands. Its pale orange flesh can also be preserved as a puree that can be sold throughout the year for use in pies, puddings, sauces, cakes, muffins and even ice cream. Here

in Essex County, a region known for its favourable growing conditions, farm-fresh produce and an emphasis on shopping locally, could our own indigenous Pawpaw provide the basis for a new food industry? Vic Beryk and his wife Darlene grow Pawpaws at a native plant nursery in Amherstburg. He views the Pawpaw as a species with potential. While stressing the importance of proper planting and care, he feels that the Pawpaw has a lot to offer, both as a landscape plant and as a viable food crop.

"This is an ideal tree for a small property and its large leaves give it an exotic look," he says. "If a homeowner can grow Apple or Cherry trees, why not Pawpaws? This could be useful for small-



Pawpaw seedling, 2nd year.



Close-up of the unusual, chocolate-coloured Pawpaw flower.

Identifying the Paw Paw

There may still be undiscovered Pawpaws growing in Essex County. The following are some identifying features:

- Slender tree with a trunk size of 12 cm (5 inches) or less.
- Often found in groups.
- Has large, smooth leaves about 20 cm (7.5 inches) long.
- Reddish brown twigs with dark buds.
- Yellow-green fruits of varying sizes that ripen in early autumn.

If you suspect that you might have Pawpaws on your property and would like a confirmed identification, call us at the Naturalized Habitat Network at 519-259-2407.

scale farming or as a specialty crop. Considering the locavore philosophy, it's a great fit."

Like many of our native plants, the Pawpaw is waiting to be re-discovered. For those willing to give them proper care, they can provide a new addition to our landscape, a supplementary source of nutrition or even local economic opportunity. In doing so, we can re-connect with our past and celebrate our natural heritage.

Dan Bissonnette is the Program Coordinator for The Naturalized Habitat Network.

(Photos by Dan Bissonnette)



Vic Beryk and his Pawpaw seedlings.



Henry Driedger examines his Pawpaw tree.



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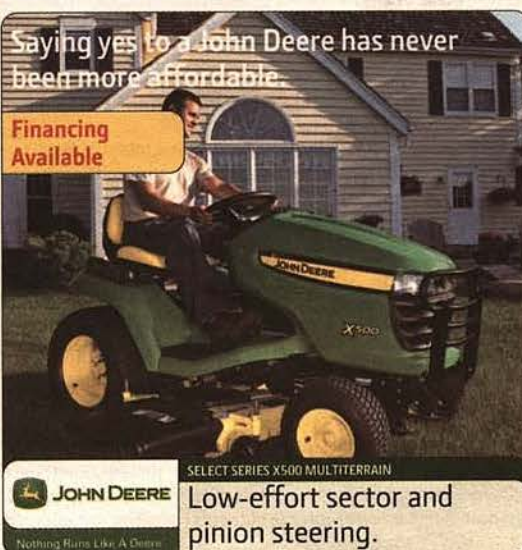
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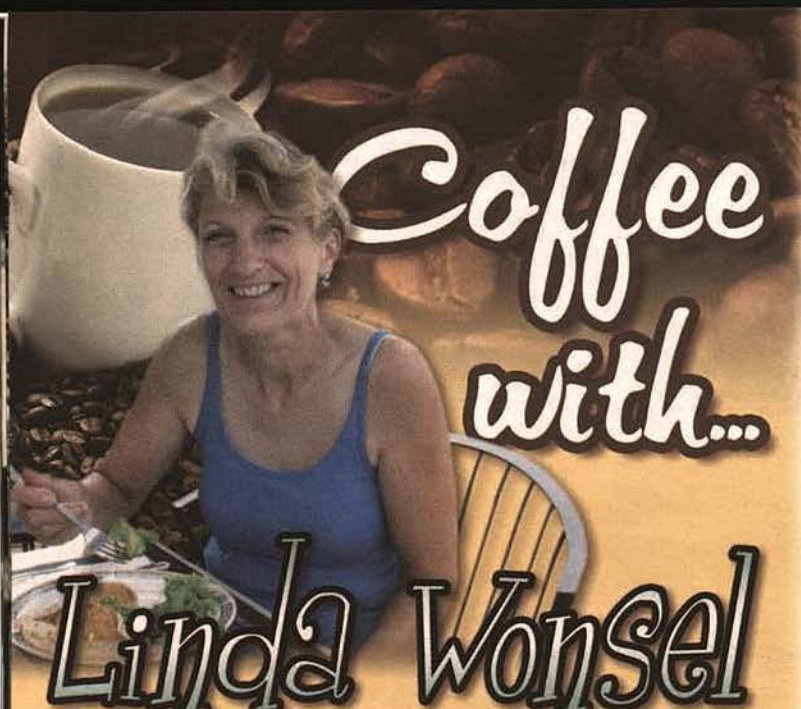
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Coffee with...

Linda Wonsel

Some people will go the extra mile for good food

By Laurie Brett

The café is buzzing with customers as I enter Crêpe Temptations in Cottam. Every table is occupied and a woman I recognize appears to be ferrying glasses of water to diners. For a moment I'm confused. Linda Wonsel, the owner of Natural Earth Organics, is supposed to be my coffee date but here she is serving people and clearing away dishes.

As she swishes past, she says that she's just helping Daniel. The owner, Daniel Choquette, is shorthanded. In fact, he's all alone in the kitchen today and managing as best he can while about a dozen pair of hungry eyes watch for the next batch of crêpes to slide onto a plate. He really does need Linda's help.

When her bussing duties are done, Linda locates two menus and writes down our order. Two chai lattes with organic whipped cream – forget the coffee! – the Chicken Crêpe-sa-dilla for me and the Smashed Potato Crêpe for her. She's not fond of meat, she says, but loves vegetables.

It's a warm and muggy day, but Linda reports that the breeze on the outdoor patio is lovely. We move outside.

Daniel's father-in-law appears at the back entrance to the patio and tosses a cherry tomato in Linda's direction. He's picked a handful off a plant hugging the walkway. She misses, so he tosses another. This is the jumping off point for our discussion about organic food.

"My dad had a garden," she says. "It was a wonderful garden and he never put any chemicals into it. I don't think back then that we knew that much about chemicals."

The garden, it turns out, was located in the Garson-Falconbridge area just outside Sudbury. In a moment of naïveté, I express surprise that anything grows in Sudbury.

"You can grow everything, it's just that it's a shorter season. Of course, you aren't going to grow watermelon, although we tried.... But carrots and tomatoes and all sorts of things grow there. Kohlrabi – do you know what kohlrabi is?"

I admit that I've never cooked with it, but I know what it looks like.

"Oh, it's so good," she says, then adds, "but broccoli is the best for us."

Although she's always been a gardener, Linda's interest in organic food didn't peak until she and her partner, Bill Drouillard, moved to Woodslee. Bill's nephew showed Linda how to grow wheatgrass and sunflower sprouts. "Wheatgrass is very good for you," she explains. Juicing the grass of young wheat plants concentrates the nutrients for better absorption by our bodies.

A fascination with wheatgrass led to an abiding interest in organic food and a change of career. Six years ago, Linda left her job in finance at the University of Windsor and partnered with Norma Weaver to buy an existing organic food business. Natural Earth Organics is the renamed business that delivers fresh organic fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry and eggs directly to consumers' homes.

But it's not as simple as it sounds. Sourcing out organic products requires a lot of time and travel. "I go far and wide," she says, listing a few organic farmers in Essex County – one in Cottam, one in Leamington, another in Woodslee. Because availability at home is "spotty", she also drives to London, Dresden, Parkhill, Rodney, Wallaceburg and Tilbury to complete her store of products. She then drives some more to deliver orders that her customers place through her website.

Daniel at Crêpe Temptations is one of Linda's customers and Linda is one of Daniel's customers. It's a mutually advantageous arrangement that explains her willingness to go the extra mile for good food.

SPOTLIGHT ON ESSEX COUNTY

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All About BOOKS



Let the Games Begin:

My Life with Olympians, Hockey Heroes, and Other Good Sports

Ralph Mellanby
and Mike Brophy

Local
Author!

Reviewed by
Laurie Brett

If you've ever had the privilege of listening to Ralph Mellanby speak, you'll know that the legendary producer of *Hockey Night in Canada* is full of stories that he's willing to share. He's rubbed elbows with athletes, team owners, broadcasters, television networks executives, entertainers and world leaders – many times under humorous circumstances or at moments of historic importance.

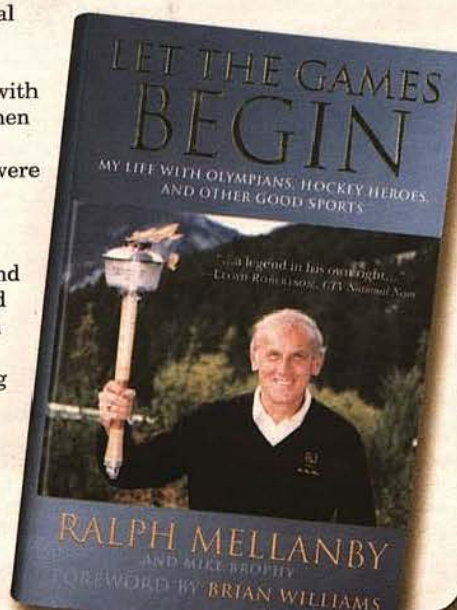
Forty years of traveling throughout the world of sports has yielded a wealth of experiences, ranging from meeting Fidel Castro during the 1991 Pan-American games in Cuba, to earning multiple Emmy Awards – one for his direction of the 1980 Winter Olympics when the U.S. defeated the Soviets and captured the gold medal in hockey.

Let the Games Begin is certainly an informative read for sports fans, but also an inspirational read for the people of Essex County. Although born in Hamilton, Mellanby moved with his family to Windsor, and then to Essex in 1949. Many of Mellanby's formative years were spent in smalltown Essex County where he attended Essex District High School, played a number of sports and worked his way into the field of sports broadcasting. From those years, he learned the importance of acknowledging where someone is from and instructed his broadcasters to mention where the players were from: "Having grown up in a small town – Essex, Ontario – I knew how exciting it was to have

your town's name mentioned on a national broadcast."

Mellanby tells it like he sees it. He recounts his efforts to live up to hockey intermissions by bringing Don Cherry on board. He also ruminates on events leading to the selection of Dolores Claman's theme song for *Hockey Night in Canada* and why CBC gave up the rights to use it. He doesn't mince words when he describes his disappointment in the Toronto Maple Leafs: "The Maple Leafs were one of the NHL's most successful franchises and had just claimed their fourth championship in six years (in 1966-67). Who could have imagined at the time that the most important franchise in the league would then embark on a more-than-forty-year odyssey of incompetence and become a laughingstock?"

Let the Games Begin is available at bookstores and retail shops throughout Essex County.



Tour Colchester: The Way We Were

Chris Carter

Local
Author!

Reviewed by
Connie-Jean Latam

Learn to treasure the "way we were", as far back as the 1770s, in this guided adventure through Colchester using old and new maps.

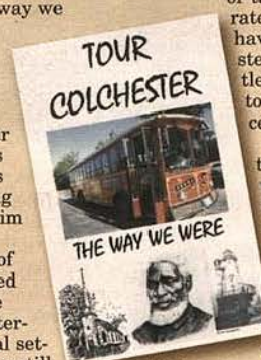
Chris Carter, researcher and author, tells the tales of the early settlers' trials and tribulations, including how they staked their claim to land, built home sites, overcame the challenges of Mother Nature, and stayed long enough to die and be buried in memorial cemeteries. Many of these original settlers' generational families still reside in the area. Because of this, they were able to contribute to the pictures contained in the book.

The tour is broken down into what Chris calls "trolley stops" – 15 in all – that allow the tourist to start from the beginning of the book and follow along

the path, or select one of the stops of interest. With many stops along the way, you may wish to do it all in a day or take each stop as a separate tour of interest. If you have relatives or friends that stem from the original settlers, you will find this book to be an exciting reminiscence. Enjoy the tour!

Chris Carter is a historical researcher who writes about his findings in his own words. He resides in Harrow and is also the author of *Tour Olinda: Essex County's Only Ghost Town*. *Tour Colchester* is spiral bound to lay flat as you walk the path. It costs \$25 and is available at local bookstores.

Connie-Jean Latam is the author of *Everything Is Food! Words of Wisdom From a Small Child*. She is also a Certified Trauma, Loss and Addictions Counsellor.



Missy Meerkat and Me

Barbara Brothers-Kipp

Local
Author!

Reviewed by
Connie-Jean Latam

A playful day in a Florida park leads Lamont, an inquisitive Old English Sheepdog to discover a new fearless and brave friend, Missy, a meerkat from Zambia, Africa. Lamont is fascinated by the lifestyle and unique conditions that Missy and her clan have to maintain for their physical well-being, often comparing it to their former home in Africa.

Lamont asks many of the same questions that children do. In doing so he realizes the value of how he is treated and well fed by his master, Jeb. Life's values and diversity are the message in this book. How well are you being treated in your clan or family? Hopefully, you have all the necessary basics in your home without having to

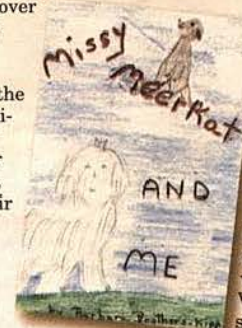
move. You can see how two unlike creatures can form a unique friendship within these pages.

Barbara Brothers-Kipp is a first time author and illustrator of *Missy Meerkat and Me*.

She is a retired Language Arts teacher and a member of the South Coast Writers of Essex County.

Missy Meerkat and Me is a delightful book that will appeal to children of all ages. It is available at the Essex Railway Station, the Essex Party and Discount store, www.amazon.com and www.volumesdirect.com. Watch for the forthcoming sequel as well.

Connie-Jean Latam is the author of *Everything Is Food! Words of Wisdom From a Small Child*. She is also a Certified Trauma, Loss and Addictions Counsellor.



The Devil in Green

Mark Chadbourne

Reviewed by
Annette Gabriele

Jump into the future where all the evil deposited upon the world has erupted and we the humans are no longer in control. We are no longer able to continue life as we know it! Civilization has had the big fall! People have no fuel, no hydro, no food. Imagine crouching in a medieval cathedral starving for a pizza, but nowhere on earth can you get one.

The characters in *The Devil in Green*, the first book in Mark Chadbourne's Dark Age series, are holding on to whatever they can, including religion. The demons of the earth abound and, as usual, men – demons themselves – have taken advantage of the situation and are using religion as an excuse to do more harm and gain control in a futile situation. The new religious

power is torturing and starving its own people, and still its sins are feeding the creatures outside the church walls.

Our slightly tarnished hero delivers a very thrilling ride through a now unrecognizable world, fighting with swords and bow and arrow, while occasionally finding a car with fuel still in it. We relive a bit of the past in this novel – fire-breathing creatures and the revival of the Knights Templar, New Age witches and mythological beasts, all in one action-packed read!

Yes this is a sci-fi thriller (not my usual choice in reading material), but character development, the storyline that meanders through this labyrinth of thrills and chills, is too good not to talk about!!! Save this one for Halloween, and don't go out after dark! No one is safe then!

Annette Gabriele, Essex County Library.



Tales of the Heartily Homeschooled

Rachel Starr Thomson
and Carolyn Joy Currey

Reviewed by
Barbara Brothers-Kipp

Combine 12 children from one family with their two parents. To this mix add eight children (cousins of the first 12) and their two parents. Put all of them into a camper van and send them on a cross-country road trip with the family pets. Toss in numerous life experiences and you end up with hours of fun and laughter between the covers of this book.

Cousins Rachel Starr Thomson and Carolyn Joy Currey share stories of their families who have been homeschooled and quite independent. They also share a deep abiding love and respect for God, although they don't belong to any specific church. Although they move several times, their roots in family go deeper than most families. Their experiences fall under four categories: Make Way for Living, Family and Other Oddities,

War Against the Machine, and According to Plan B. As you read, you will go from smiling, to sidesplitting laughter, to a real appreciation for large families.

From trying to match socks and pantyhose for 12 children, to exploding barbecues and Christmas trees falling over, to what happens when the children try to mop up a leaking water heater with a shammy cloth, you will feel blessed to read this entertaining book.

Rachel Starr Thomson is the author of two books in the Seventh World Trilogy – *Worlds Unseen* and *Burning Light*. She is the author of several novels and many articles, some of them available for free from Little Dozen Press at www.rachelstarrthomson.com.



Barbara Brothers-Kipp is a retired Language Arts teacher and author of *Missy Meerkat and Me*.

I am Nujood: Age 10 and Divorced

Nujood Ali with Delphine Minoui

Reviewed by
Elly Takaki

Sometimes you find a book of non-fiction that is just as gripping as fiction. The story of Nujood Ali of Yemen is just such a story.

It's hardly imaginable from a Western perspective: a girl married at age 10. Imagine this girl. Her favourite things are school, drawing, and playing with her brothers and sisters. But there are too many mouths to feed, and her father decides that she is old enough to be sold into marriage, something not uncommon in Yemen.

Young Nujood has never been given the facts of life, wonders what marriage means for her, and fears leaving the safety and security of her family. The day of celebration arrives, and then she is whisked away to a remote mountain village to live with a stranger and his family. More disturbingly, this man, her husband, who promised her family that he would not

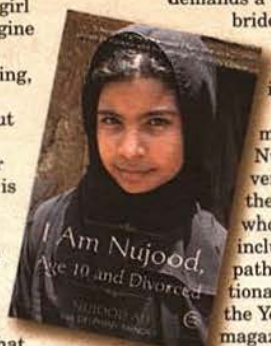
consummate the marriage until after Nujood reaches puberty, abruptly and violently breaks this promise on her first night in his house.

After months of living a nightmare, on April 2, 2008, Nujood decides to end her suffering. A frail wisp of a child, she walks into a courthouse and demands a divorce. Out of all the child brides in Yemen, a country with a tradition of marrying girls off at a young age, she is the first.

The subject matter may be disturbing, but Nujood's courage and perseverance are uplifting, as is the determination of those who help her. Her allies include an activist lawyer, sympathetic judges and the international press. Named Woman of the Year in 2008 by Glamour magazine, Nujood was also called "one of the greatest women I have ever seen," by Hillary Clinton.

This brief and riveting book provides a startling glimpse inside another culture.

Elly Takaki, McGregor Public Library.



Incarceron

Catherine Fisher

Reviewed by
Lynda Schlichther

Incarceron was initially an experiment. It would be a world that would provide everything – education, balanced diet, exercise, spiritual welfare and purposeful work – a paradise for those who would live there. Could it be done? Who should go?

It is decided that all criminals, undesirables, political extremists and degenerates will be transported there. The gate is sealed and the location of Incarceron is known only by one person, the Warden. One hundred and fifty years later, the Warden reports that the progress is excellent.

The decay was gradual. The paradise has become a prison. The prison is alive. Year by year it tightens its grip, watches and listens to everyone and everything. Conditions inside are livable... barely.

Four people decide to make their escape. Finn the star seer, Keiro his oathbrother, Gildas a Sapienti (a wise one) and Attia, devoted servant to Finn. The task of finding the door to the Outside is immense but they have the help of the crystal key.

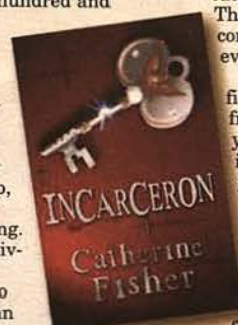
Claudia lives in the Outside world, a perfect world, or so it would seem. Claudia's father is the Warden of Incarceron. He holds a powerful position in his realm, and has arranged for Claudia to marry Prince Caspar, son of Queen Sia. Caspar is arrogant and immature, an unbearable substitute for her original betrothed Prince Giles. Claudia has very strong suspicions that Prince Giles' death may have been part of a plot arranged by Queen Sia. Now her son will be next in line to the throne.

Claudia, with the help of Jared, her tutor, also secures a crystal key. Through this key she meets and communicates with Finn, and eventually tries to help him.

This book is a blend of science fiction and fantasy. It grabs you from the first pages and entices you to keep reading. Fisher's intriguing writing style keeps you on the edge of your seat. Although it has been designated as a 'young person's' book, I believe people of all ages will enjoy this uniquely interesting and exciting book.

Keep your eyes open for Ms. Fisher's sure-to-be-superb sequel, *Sapphique*, due out December 2010.

Lynda Schlichther is a member of the Essex Public Library's Book Club.



A Taste of Essex County



Viewpointe Estate Winery

By Laurie Brett

Winemaker John Fancsy's invitation to sit in the kitchen at Viewpointe Estate Winery is hard to refuse when the sweet butterscotch scent of warm orange cake greets you at the door. Amid trays of fresh mushrooms, tomatoes of all sizes, and sweet Hungarian peppers, Chef Mary Ann Marshall starts to prep for Tuesday night's Lakeside Patio Dinner. This week it's all about corn for the "Sufferin' Succotash – Southern Summer" menu: Tomato salad with cornbread croutons, grilled bourbon glazed pork with creamy grits and succotash, and peach-blueberry cobbler for dessert. Wine by the glass – perhaps Viewpointe's Riesling – might pair well with the meal.

The culinary approach at Viewpointe, Marshall says, is to marry local flavours with globally inspired cuisine. From its idyllic position along the north shore of Lake Erie, the winery's proximity to local flavours could not be better. Although she keeps an eye open for seasonal produce all along County Road 50, Marshall jokingly notes that she frequently shops "in Steve's pantry". She's referring to co-owner Steve Fancsy who lives down the road and regularly delivers the bounty of his garden to the Viewpointe kitchen, including the tomatoes for the night's salad.

Learning to approach food and cooking from a winemaker's perspective has been key to Marshall's evolution as a chef.

"If you come to cooking like a winemaker would come to wine, you think about taste, but you also think about balance, texture, aroma, blending flavours. You think from the perspective of structure."

Having a more expansive view of what you do – what the winery's slogan refers to as "a different point of view" – is integral to Viewpointe's entire operation. As the region's first destination winery, Viewpointe not only contains winemaking facilities and a retail store, but Fancsy and his partners also thought to include a hospitality building, banquet facilities and a culinary arts centre, allowing them to offer cooking classes and host a master taster course accredited

by Niagara College.

But thinking expansively doesn't apply only to the facilities and business model. In 2002, the fledgling winery became involved in an experimental grape-breeding project that ultimately isolated three new varieties of grapes from a field of almost 2,800. Fancsy says the three unnamed varieties are "totally and wholly" local – infused with homegrown flavour. The end result is Colchester Cuvee, a 2008 vintage red wine made from a blend of all three grapes.

How do you know when you've found "homegrown flavour" in a wine?

"When you match it to the food of the area and you find some harmony," says Fancsy.

The difference, he explains, comes from the "terroir" – the taste a grape or a tomato or a green pepper gets because of where it's grown. The soil, climate, precipitation and sun exposure all influence the flavour of the grapes as much as they influence the flavour of our food.

There's no better time than harvest time to experience Essex County from "a different point of view." This fall, take a drive along County Road 50, visit Viewpointe Estate Winery, and learn about some of the local treasures hidden along the way. It will change your perspective on just how well food and wine go together right here at home.

Wine Pairings

Serve Pesto Grissini with Viewpointe's 2005 Cabernet Franc, a medium-bodied red, or their 2006 Riesling.

PESTO WITH HEMP

- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ to 2 cups (very tightly packed) basil, cleaned, stems removed
- 1½ to 2 cups (very tightly packed) parsley, cleaned, stems removed
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 to 3 teaspoons hemp seed
- ½ to ¾ cup olive oil, plus more for storing
- Parmeggiano Reggiano, approx. 1 to 1½ cups (to add when serving)

Place garlic and salt in a blender or food processor and process until finely chopped. Add basil and parsley, blend for 10-15 seconds, scrape down the sides and process again for another 20 seconds. Scrape down the sides. Add the black pepper and hemp seeds and blend for 15 seconds. Add ½ cup of olive oil and process into a thick paste. To store – spoon the mixture into a clean container and pour more olive oil to cover the entire surface. When using, mix equal parts of pesto and grated cheese. You may use less cheese if desired.



PESTO GRISSINI (ITALIAN BREAD STICKS)

MAKES ABOUT 30 BREAD STICKS

- 1½ boxes (125 grams or 4½ ounces each) of Grissini (Italian Bread Sticks)
- ¾ cup pesto (one 190 gram jar)
- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

OR

- ½ cup pesto with hemp (see recipe above)
- ½ cup finely grated parmeggiano reggiano
- ½ cup olive oil

Pre-heat the oven to 375 degrees F. Lay two 18-inch long pieces of plastic wrap lengthwise, with the top layer overlapping the bottom layer by half.

Spoon pesto, olive oil and cheese onto the plastic wrap. It should be the consistency of a medium thick dressing.

Spread the mixture width and lengthwise, leaving a couple of inches clear around the edges.

Place the bread sticks on top of the pesto and bring up the sides of the plastic wrap.

Coat and roll the bread sticks gently every few minutes for 10-20 minutes. Try to coat all of the bread sticks with the mixture.

Transfer to a baking sheet, lining them up without touching each other.

Bake for about 10 minutes, turning the bread sticks at mid point.

Let cool on a rack. May be kept in an airtight container for 1-2 days, wrapped in foil.



Fruit, folklore and the Jesuit pear

By Andy Comber

It had been a long and difficult journey for the Jesuit missionary. Aided by native guides, he had explored a seemingly endless shoreline that stretched as far as the eye could see. He pondered whether he might be the first European to see these waters, these lands.

There in a clearing, marveling at the richness of the earth, the missionary planted a pear seed, a living token of his homeland. He would probably never know that his tree would rise with the dawn of New France. It would mature and bear fruit over centuries to become a part of history and folklore in a new nation called Canacia.

Although there is uncertainty over the story of the original planting, there is no doubt that a magnificent Jesuit pear tree stands on the historic Iler farm near Harrow, not far from the shores of Lake Erie. Historical accounts agree that enormous pear trees were once a striking feature in this region, a living symbol of French settlement in North America.

Marcel Bénétiau, an associate professor of French folklore at the University of Sudbury, and a native of River Canard, has done extensive research on the Jesuit pear. In May 2007, he made a special trip, a pilgrimage of sorts, to see

the Iler Jesuit pear.

Local records and writings testify to the enormous size of the original Jesuit pear trees, which reached heights of over 18 metres and girths of up to three metres, providing 40 bushels of pears a year, Bénétiau said.

The Iler specimen is estimated to be between 200 and 300 years old. It measures 12 metres high with a trunk measuring over five metres in circumference. Even with its great age, and some advanced state of decay, it produces a good number of small sweet pears that ripen in mid-August.

History and folklore have perpetuated the common belief that Jesuit missionaries brought the first pear trees from France, planting pips, the seeds, or cuttings along our waterways, Bénétiau said. Although the pears are not mentioned in the *Jesuit Relations* and other

volumes — reports from missionaries in the field — a strong link with the Jesuits has survived the centuries through verbal and written history.

It is said that the early French settlers planted Jesuit pear trees in groups of twelve to represent the twelve Apostles, mixing them among their orchards of apples, cherries and plums. The twelfth tree, representing Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus, was supposed to be planted apart from the others.

Articles published in *The Detroit Free News* in April and May 1941 declare this planting practice to be an established fact. They chronicled events at Detroit's Gladwin Park, where a crowd, including members of the Jesuit order, had gathered to pay homage to "St. Peter" — a tree.

"No common tree by any means, but a tree tied up with the earliest history of Detroit and the lone survivor of an ancient orchard of 12 giant pear trees planted in the park by an early French settler and named after the 12 Apostles," Garnet Warfel reported.

The crowd became somewhat surprised and appalled when the master of ceremonies, George W. Stark, an "old timer" with the *News*, announced this tree was in fact the Judas tree, Warfel wrote.

"To say the news was a surprise is putting it mildly, for in the faces of the men, women and

children, came looks of consternation as if the very mention of the name Judas robbed the occasion of some of its glory."

The Detroiters planted 20 seedlings cultivated from cuttings of the original tree, be it St. Peter or Judas, so it would "live anew."

Bénétiau has noted a renewed interest in the rare fruit tree in recent years.

In 2001, during the 300th anniversary celebrations of the founding of Detroit, the City of

Windsor planted three Jesuit pear trees on the Canadian side of the Detroit River to commemorate the 1749 arrival of the

first settlers on the south bank of the river. As part of the celebrations, a group of area French speakers founded a tree nursery, in order to provide pears to anyone interested in propagating the species.

There is a growing interest outside the French-speaking community in the fate of the Jesuit pear trees, for many consider them to have substantial historic value, Bénétiau said.

"It is a cultural object as much as an agricultural one," Bénétiau said. "It is a species well worth preserving."

Despite a number of commercial shortfalls, including its small fruit size, the Jesuit pear has attracted the attention of researchers from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. It is preserved through the Harrow Research Centre's Canadian Clonal Genebank, under curator Margie Luffman. At present, research biologist Roberto Michelutti is acting curator.

The mandate of the genebank is to protect and preserve the genetic diversity of Canadian fruit crops and their wild relatives.

"There is a huge diversity," Michelutti said.

The Harrow facility stores, maintains and reproduces living samples of fruit crops numbering over 3,200 unique accessions. The diversity is evident in the categories, including 825 apples, 122 pears, 272 peaches, plums, cherries and apricots, 1,701 strawberries, 100 currants and gooseberries, 173 raspberries, 12 elderberries, 7 blueberries and 28 roses.

Preserving the Jesuit pear is important in view of its qualities, including a natural resistance to insects and fire blight, its robustness and extreme

longevity, Michelutti said.

"It carries important genetic material sought by breeders."

Great efforts are made in the laboratory to be sure all plant material in the genebank is free of viruses and other maladies. Sharing plants with breeders also helps maintain availability of different varieties.

Efforts are underway to find and identify old fruit trees in Essex County, particularly Jesuit pear trees, as less than 40 are known to exist here, Michelutti said. The Essex Region Conservation Authority is assisting and mapping the tree locations.

Material from the trees will be DNA-tested — what Michelutti calls "finger printing." The first idea is to establish the trees relationship to each other in the region and, hopefully, in the near future, locate the origin of the trees in Europe — possibly in France or Belgium.

Michelutti said he is very interested in seeing which trees may be related to the Jesuit pear on the Iler Farm and where the age-old tree has its genealogical beginnings.

"We hope to shed a little bit of light on that puzzle."



Essex County is home to a rare Jesuit pear tree estimated to be between 200 and 300 years old. It measures 12 metres high with a trunk measuring over five metres in circumference.



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The *How It's Made:* Turn of a Pen

By Laurie Brett

Diane Bédard of Windsor is a jill-of-all-trades.

She's an educator – with 25 years of previous work experience with the Windsor Essex County District School Board – who participates in an educators' project that has her posting a photo a day on a flickr page (flickr.com/photos/windsordi). In the third year of the project, Diane hasn't missed a day of posting photos that "speak to our learning or education that day."

She's also a librarian who now works for Knowledge Ontario as the Learn Ontario project manager, providing virtual technology support province-wide. "We're building the digital citizen," she says.

It goes without saying that she's also a technology expert who owns every Apple gadget ever made. Her new iPad tablet computer is so integrated into her work and personal life that she carries it like a book, using it to make phone calls, read e-books, map her next destination, or find stores that sell hardware kits for her latest project.

Most importantly, for our purposes, Diane is a passionate woodworker whose attention to detail has "turned" many a pen into a lovingly crafted gift for friends and family.

It was Diane's tip about the Osage orange tree on Highway 3, just north of the Sexton Sideroad, that led Spotlight to investigate the tree and feature it in our Spring 2010 issue.

In this issue of Spotlight, Diane's interest in the Osage orange goes beyond curiosity. It tackles the most difficult task of turning the citrusy, sticky and inedible fruit into something that is not only functional but also beautiful to behold.

This photo documentary was compiled using photos and information provided by Diane. Not only does she pursue some interesting hobbies, but she also documents them as she goes. Diane is a "Saturday morning regular" – one of about 12 woodworkers who meet at St. Clair College's main campus every Saturday morning. She's perfected her craft through patience and persistence, but credits Harrow's Larry Robertson as "the master who taught me."

"Woodworking is a very soothing art," she says.

"Making sawdust is very rewarding; it's always interesting to see what the lathe reveals."

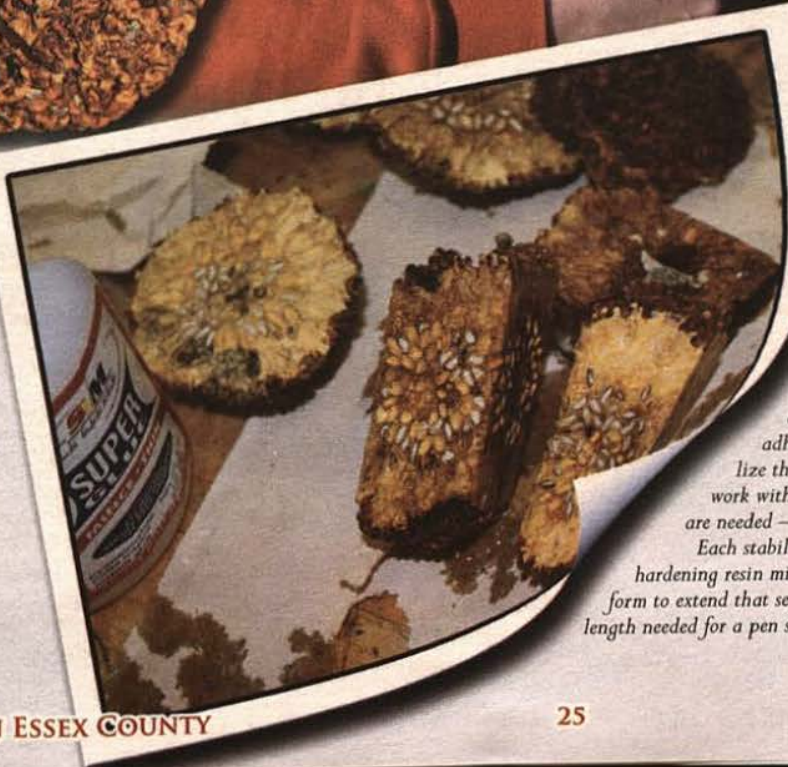
"And, if you're frustrated," she adds, "hitting something hard with a hammer is very liberating."

C Collecting – Diane collects the raw Osage orange fruit after it falls. "With those thorns on the tree, you wait for it to fall," she says. Only the largest oranges will do; each fruit loses 75 per cent of its weight and just over half its size as it air dries.

C Sawn Blanks – The dried oranges are cut into one-inch core cubes with a bandsaw, then thoroughly soaked with Cyanoacrylate adhesive, more commonly known as instant glue or CA glue, to stabilize them. In their natural state, the cubes are too porous and fragile to work with... and the lovely white seeds drop out! Many layers of CA glue are needed – a time-consuming but essential step.

Each stabilized cube is then capped with a pouring form and "inlase" – a hardening resin mixed with ground stone and coffee grounds – is poured into the form to extend that section's length. These extended ends serve two purposes: they add the length needed for a pen section, and they provide a stable end point to work on the lathe.

Dried Fruit – It takes about five months for the fruit to dry completely, shrink and harden. Mould and rot are the biggest dangers during this period, so Diane dries many more oranges than she thinks she may need.



Turning Starts — The core sections are centre-drilled lengthwise and a brass tube is glued in. This tube slides over a steel rod, called a mandrel, which mounts between the centre points of a lathe. The lathe then spins the mandrel and very sharp skewers (or chisels) allow the woodworker to slowly turn away (or peel off) surplus material.

Sometimes the work on the lathe gets a bit messy. As seen here, the inlay shoots off a fine string of plastic as it is turned. In addition, the orange is still very porous closer to the centre and frequent stops to drizzle on more CA glue are needed to prevent it from "blowing off" the brass tubes.

As they're being turned, the blanks need frequent stabilization. Whenever a void opens, Diane must stop the lathe, unmount the section, drip in a drop of thick CA glue, pack it tightly with finely powdered coffee grounds, let it set until hard, then remount the blank and continue turning.

She uses coffee grounds ("Fine espresso grounds, dried after I've already drunk the coffee, of course!") as a natural rich dark wood filler. The coffee bean has lots of woody fibre, so it turns, sands and finishes like wood. Any dark areas you see on this blank are actually filled with coffee grounds.

The thickness of the remaining blank is measured with a micrometer to ensure accurate dimensioning. Micrometers measure to within thousands of an inch!

Filling Voids — The blanks are finally down to the precise dimension needed to fit the pen hardware and are ready for the finish.

The "finish" consists of building up many layers of CA glue and then sanding and polishing progressively from 800 grit up to 2400 grit. The finest levels of sanding use the same micro grits and buffing compounds as used in high-end auto body finish detailing.

Osage Orange Pen — The completed pen is perched among some of the remaining outside slices of the dried Osage oranges. The average pen takes about three hours to complete. This one took about 80 hours.

Pens can be turned out of anything and into anything.



Spalted American White Ash with Turquoise — Spalting occurs when mushroom fungi penetrate dead wood. Spores start to rot the wood, causing discoloration and creating vivid strips of black and red. The lines develop as opposing "camps" of mushroom fungi encounter one another inside the log and set up "barriers" to protect their turf! All the beautiful zigzag line patterns you see on this pen are mushroom "defence lines." Worm holes have been filled with inlay and crushed turquoise.

Bizarre Pen Swap — Diane contributed this pen when the challenge was to turn a pen that was perfectly functional but uncomfortable enough that you wouldn't choose to write your memoirs with it. It was only appropriate, given her fascination with the Osage orange, that she'd embed an Osage orange wood pen inside an Osage orange!

Canadian to the Core! — This pen uses the "Canadiana" parts kit, with the heavy gold and silver "bling". Diane says it seemed most appropriate to turn the pen body from tubes of resin that had been filled with shredded Canadian currency. A "rich" pen to use, indeed!



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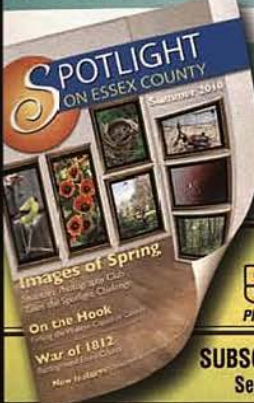
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